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A PILGRIMAGE

TO

AUVERGNE,

FROM

PICARDY TO LE VELAY.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
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LE PUY.

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A PILGRIMAGE

TO

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FROM

PICARDY TO LE VELAY.

BY LOUISA STUART COSTELLO,

AUTHOR OF

"A SUMMER AMONGST THE BOCAGES AND THE VINES,"
"THE QUEEN MOTHER," ETC.

8566S

"As soon as we dismounted at our inns, I wrote all down, whether it was late or early, that posterity might have the advantage of it, for there is nothing like writing for the preservation of events."—*Johnes's Froissart.*

Z.C.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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A

PILGRIMAGE TO AUVERGNE.

CHAPTER I.

Palace of Jacques Cœur.

THE plan of the Palace of Jacques Cœur is extremely irregular, which may probably be accounted for from the space allotted to it. By a charter of Louis VIII. the people of Bourges were permitted to build on the ancient Roman ramparts, in consequence of the increasing size of the town in 1224. Jacques Cœur probably bought up all the ground he could, but many of the houses were in his way, and prevented his plans, if indeed he did not rather prefer the intricacy perceptible in the edifice. Part of the house looks like a fortress, the rest like an ornamented palace: the strange-shaped towers on one side are all of different sizes and forms.

The façade from La Rue Jacques Cœur is that which is most striking, and on which all the riches of architectural fancy must have been lavished: its beautiful *tourelle* and pavilion, with an open balcony of the most delicate workmanship,—its *flamboyants* ornaments, inscriptions, and enigmas in stone,—all are charming and surprising. The celebrated device is no longer to be seen where it once stood, but is preserved in some of the stone-work saved from the wreck of revolutionary violence, and since nearly sacrificed to the utilitarian notions which have swept away more than half the precious *débris* of this beautiful monument. We saw, however, the balustrades entwined with a *banderolle*, on which we read

A vaillants cueurs rien impossible,

and the hearts and pilgrim shells which are repeated everywhere in the ornaments.

On each side of the richly adorned doorway, now much defaced, are still seen the semblance of a half-open window, in stone, before which is an open carved balcony, where stands a figure in the costume of the *bourgeoisie* of the period, one male and the other female: they are looking out into the street, and seem watching

anxiously. What these statues are intended to represent, cannot now be known: the common people of Bourges call them the faithful servants of Jacques Cœur, who stood all night at the windows, to warn him not to approach his house, where his enemies had possession.

His misfortunes did not overwhelm him immediately, and after the first attacks of his foes he appears to have been triumphant, as we see him in 1448 deputed, together with Juvenel des Ursins Bishop of Reims, and Tanneguy du Châtel bailli de Berry, to compliment Pope Nicolas V. on his elevation to the papal dignity, and on the occasion displaying his usual magnificence, going to Rome in galleys of wonderful pomp and splendour, which he had himself furnished for the whole embassy. On his voyage, this man of wealth, finding that the Château de Final, which held out for the king against the Genoese forces, that were besieging it, required re-victualling, undertook the whole charge, both for the castle and the town.

This being considered, it is not impossible that, in memory of the service his servants had rendered him, he really had their figures placed where they stand; though unfortunately

his danger, was far from being passed, and overtook him afterwards.

In the central pavilion is the chapel, one of the most perfect *bijoux* ever beheld. The porch is ornamented with bas-reliefs and ornaments of the richest kind: the spiral staircase leads to apartments now occupied by clerks connected with the business of the Hôtel de Ville, one of whom with the greatest courtesy invited us in, and exhibited all the riches of his domicile.

The extreme smallness of the dimensions of this beautiful chapel makes it a matter of surprise how all Jacques Cœur's family could here have attended mass: the numerous domestics must have been placed in an adjoining gallery. The seats of honour are still to be seen parted off. The roof is bright with the richest ultramarine and gold; the frescoes of angels bearing scrolls are even yet fresh, and the drawing extremely correct and graceful; some of the cherubs' heads are exquisite, the positions of the white-robed choir inimitable, and the whole executed with a purity of expression and delicacy of colouring quite faultless.

Two niches or tribunes project from the chapel,—one into the street, the other into the

court. They are open, supported by richly carved columns, and covered with delicate ornament, now greatly defaced. These niches are empty now, but formerly held two statues, an equestrian one of Charles VII. armed at all points, and a figure of Jacques Cœur himself, mounted on his mule, which is *shod the reverse way.* This is one of the enigmas which appear in all corners, and is difficult to explain.

It will hardly be believed that the barbarians of the law have, within a few years, in arranging this magnificent hotel for their purpose, destroyed the most precious morsels, in order to make rooms, closets, and passages. Several fine chimney-pieces, unique in their kind, have been broken up,—some divided into two, some concealed in a dark passage,—and the walls have been scraped and cleaned, carrying away, with accumulated dirt, carvings in stone of exquisite beauty, which there was no occasion whatever to remove: cornices, wainscot, ceilings,—all fell before the hammer of the carpenter; and it is only here and there, in examining closely, that the most exquisite little bits are found, proving the glories which have been mercilessly swept away, — *statuettes* in niches, courses of

foliage like lacework, vaulted cielings in cupboards, concealed staircases with doors opening on to them, covered and surrounded with carving,

"Able to draw men's envies upon man!"

Most of these treasures are daubed over with a thick coating of paint or whitewash, but it is something that they do not lie in a heap of rubbish, such as distresses the mind, in an inner court, from whence a judicious order from government is now rescuing and restoring some pieces of sculpture worthy to be preserved in a National Museum.

Some of the wooden doors, which no longer exist, were richly carved in relief; one which led to a long mysterious narrow passage, conducting to the Place Berry, is peculiarly fine, being covered with the heart and shell which form the heads of the nails with which it is studded; this is to be seen elsewhere, and is replaced by a modern one exactly copied, but of very inferior execution.

Nothing can be so singularly irregular as the whole building; not a line runs parallel with another, not a wall which does not meet another at right angles—all is apparently confused and intricate, a perfect labyrinth,

"A marvel and a secret."

There are two figures on the principal staircase, whose rich costume, similar to those seen, with all their details, in the manuscripts of the period, proclaim them to be Jacques Cœur, and his wife Marie de Léodepart.

On the tunic of the merchant his name is in hieroglyphics as usual, the hearts and the pilgrim shell of St. Jacques; or it has been thought that some unrecorded connexion perhaps existed between him and the family of Guy Coquille, so well-known in the Nivernois. In one hand the founder holds a hammer, and in the other a bouquet, which he presents to his wife.

In the *salle-à-manger*, the form remains the same as in old times; there is still the gallery erected for the musicians, *jongleurs*, *trouvères* and troubadours, whose *gaie science* had not then quite disappeared. About the centre of the room is a large flagstone, leading to a cellar of extensive size, destined to receive the most precious objects, in case of the necessity of concealing them; this was probably hidden by some ornamental flooring over it.

On the roof are still to be seen quantities of ornamental *statuettes* in lead, executed with great care, notwithstanding the height from which they were to be viewed. The pipes and chimneys have twisted columns, wreathed with beautifully

moulded foliage; numerous grotesque figures of apes carrying off children, dogs with open mouths, and other enormities, gape and grin from every corner. We mounted a very high tower, from a window of which these things were pointed out to us.

Over every door are, or were, entablatures which represent, with great minuteness, the occupations carried on in that part of the building. Over the kitchen entrance a group is busy cooking; over the chapel, figures ringing a bell, bringing the host in procession; over another, a page ushering in company. Some have trees over the porch, of different oriental shapes; barrels, coils of ropes, agricultural implements, vessels, piles of merchandise—in fact the whole of the walls, inside and out, seem incrusted with hieroglyphics; and when this wondrous fabric was in its original splendour, it must have been as dazzling and elaborately extraordinary as any that Moorish or Indian architecture could produce.

Another of the wonders and beauties of Bourges is a concealed treasure, situated in La Rue des Vielles Prisons, where a convent of Sœurs Bleues is established in the ancient palace called l'Hôtel l'Allemand. We had walked several times down the street, and had observed some antique-looking windows and a low portal, but

should not have ventured to ring at the inviting bell, had we not been assured that the Sisters would with the greatest *empressement* show us the interior.

We rejoiced at having done so, for the pretty, quiet, neat nun who admitted us, exhibited to our view such exquisite *morceaux* of art, that we could not sufficiently congratulate ourselves on having found what so few amongst this supine population were acquainted with. Its very existence had been denied when I inquired for it, and one of the principal bankers of Bourges, of whom I asked, seemed to consider me in an *English dream;* his wife,—for ladies are generally in all *bureaux,* —with more tact, seeing that I insisted on the Hôtel's existence, thought it well to acknowledge there had been such a monument, but assured me that it was now destroyed.

However, our triumph was complete, for we visited it in all its details; and even if the Maison de Jacques Cœur itself did not exist, Bourges would be worth a *Pilgrimage,* if it could only show the exquisite little miniature Hôtel l'Allemand.

It takes its name from its proprietors of the sixteenth century, rich financiers; but the date of its original construction is by no means certain. Tradition says that Louis XI. was born here: it is a pity to believe this, as he

deserved to have first seen the light in a dungeon rather than in so lovely a spot.

A poet or an artist might have built this temple for himself, after his own taste, but that *ces gens-là* seldom have sufficient funds to carry out the desire they may have to execute an idea. It seems that the outward simplicity is not accidental but designed, in order that the riches of the interior ornaments may impress the mind still more. The doors of entrance were, however, fine, but their grace rather injured by shields of armorial bearings having been added by some later proprietor, and intruded amongst the delicate mouldings; revolutionary vengeance was *therefore* directed against these doors, and their beauties almost all destroyed.

Having entered the court, which is small and of elegant shape, the charms of the building are in full view; an upper court in the form of a terrace is constructed over enormous cellars, which are of unknown and mysterious date. The walls are adorned with medallions of great beauty; the mouldings and tablets decorated in the richest manner; small *tourelles* covered with arabesque tracery to the very pinnacles; portals supported by wreathed pillars, and the whole so small and delicate that it seems to require

a microscope to see the details in bas-relief, which cluster all over the *façade* of this fairy edifice; yet the *ensemble* is bold and grand, as if executed on a much larger scale.

Over the doorway of the principal *tourelle* is a medallion of a warrior with a grotesquely-shaped helmet on. It is thought that a devise which is round it has allusion to the legend which asserts that the kings of France descended from Priam, one of whose sons founded Troyes in Champagne.

Another exquisite *tourelle* rests upon a bizarre figure of a warrior, strangely distorted, who holds in his arms a fox, and has wings to his helmet; the general effect of this strange support is nevertheless good. All the windows are incrusted with the richest ornament, and all is perfectly preserved.

Hours may be passed here in examining the inconceivable varieties of detail, prodigally scattered round this unique court; nor is the interior of the house less beautiful.

The chapel or oratory is one mass of lace-work carving, of the smallest and most miniature-like patterns; on the ceiling the same mystery appears as that with which Jacques Cœur loved to surround himself. Three large slabs of stone are divided into thirty compartments, each con-

taining a picture in bas-relief, sculptured with the most astonishing minuteness. Every one of these is a riddle. Here a hand is gathering a chesnut; here a globe is bursting into flames, and some of the subjects are less delicate than grotesque; the letters E and R are very frequently repeated; and in a little decorated niche near the altar the whole ground of the foliage pattern is covered with the same letters placed in every possible position.

Numerous spiral staircases, adorned with *statuettes* on brackets, all carved with the greatest perfection, lead to the different *salons*.

One of these has a carved wood ceiling, in compartments containing bosses and rosettes of extreme beauty; in the middle of each rosette is a letter, and J and G appear as well as E and R.

On the ground-floor is a room, now used as a school-room by the *Sœurs Bleues*, and quite a picture for neatness and order; here is a magnificent chimney-piece enriched with arabesques. The porcupines of Louis XII., the ermine of Anne of Brittany, and the salamander of Francis I. are conspicuous here; the latter is surrounded by a row of hurdles, which form a cage in which he burns. I do not remember to have seen the devise so represented before.

From the front court there is a covered way, something similar to that at the Hôtel de Jacques Cœur, which conducts to the back court, and into the street behind. It has a very sensible descent, and is calculated for the passage of horses. The vaulting is very ancient and fine.

The back of the house is highly ornamented, but much less so than the principal façade.

On a black marble slab in a room close to the outer paved court, is the following inscription:—

Des Allemans l'hôtel,
Se peut donner loz tel.
Jadis pour moi trois curés prendrent cure,
A d'estimer d'eux qui m'avrait en sa cure,
Mais en l'an mil dix et huit et cinq cens,
Les accorda d'une façon nouvelle;
Car par arest finitif leur revelle
Que chacun d'eux en son an me tiendra
Dont Sainct Bonnet le premier obtiendra,
Saint Jean des Champs le suivra de bien près,
Puis la Fourchault viendra dernière après,
Et pour jouir sans l'un l'aultre envier
Commenceront droit au mois de janvier,
Qui ouvre a tous la porte de l'année.
O bon lecteur! par telle chose ordonnée
Venter te peux, quelque part ou paroisses,
D'avoir trouvé maison de trois paroisses.

At one time it was proposed to establish a museum in this hotel, but it was afterwards de-

cided to receive within its walls from two to three hundred little girls, who are instructed in the first rudiments of learning by Les Sœurs de la Sainte Famille or Sœurs Bleues, who took possession of it in 1826.

CHAPTER II.

Maison de Cujas.

THE next building of interest at Bourges is the Maison de Cujas, who died in this town in 1590, where his fame for learning had attracted a host of pupils, and where he was called Le Père des Ecoliers. His opinions, his science, and his services to letters made him numerous enemies; and the religious controversy forced on him embittered his life. He, however, courageously defended himself, and publicly maintained his doctrine of the propriety of allowing liberty of conscience.

Threats, promises, bribes, and entreaties importuned him to embrace the cause of the League against Henry IV., but he remained honourably steady to his principles. He had the happiness of saving the life of Jules-César Scaliger, at

Valence, during the massacre of St. Bartholomew; Scaliger came afterwards to visit Cujas at Bourges, when the illustrious professor thus wrote to a friend:—

"I have here M. de la Scala, whose pleasant society has drawn me from the sepulchre into which I was miserably plunged: he has partly dried my piteous tears."

Cujas was secretary of Catherine de Medicis, and had a pension settled on him by Henry III. of 1200 livres, dispensing him from fulfilling his functions at court, as they might interfere with his literary occupations. The town of Bourges gave a pension to his daughter Susanne, whose celebrity was, however, of a very different kind to that of her father.

There is a fine portrait of him in the Hôtel de Ville, near a precious one of Jacques Cœur, which latter was found in a dilapidated apartment in a perfect state of preservation; the colour as fresh and glowing as the execution is delicate and expressive.

The house of Cujas is now a *gens-d'armerie,* and there is little remaining of the antique structure, which is in great part of brick, much ornamented in patterns. There is some curious allegorical fresco painting on one of the walls,

now almost effaced, and there still exist some medallions round the court.

The archbishopric and its gardens are remarkable, but possess little interest beyond their vastness and their vicinity to the cathedral, the *tourelles* and spires of which appear between the trees. There is in the garden a remarkably fine avenue of lindens of great height, considered unique in France; but the walks are in this part so slovenly, that its beauty is much injured. The building was never finished; thus, though some part of it is fine, the rest not answering to it, the effect of the whole is spoilt. It was begun by the Archbishop Phélyppeaux de la Viellière, whose family obtained a *lettre de cachet* from the king to prevent its continuation. The garden was designed by Lenôtre.

There is a museum at Bourges, or rather a suite of *salons* which afford place for enough curiosities to fill a very extensive gallery. It is crowded to such a degree that, as at the Hôtel de Cluny in Paris, the *embarras des richesses* has no end, and nothing can be seen well. As this house is only used as a temporary receptacle for all the treasures it contains, it is to be hoped a larger one will soon be granted; but there is little learning

or taste for the arts in Bourges, and everything is as stagnant and vapid as possible.

We had heard that in the Place Gorthaine might still be seen an altar once sacred to the Druids. In vain we inquired if such a stone as la Pierre de Léach-ry existed: nothing could exceed the civility with which every one of whom we inquired rushed to their doors, called their neighbours, and ran to the corners of their streets; but no one had ever heard of such a thing, and we were nearly giving it up in despair, when, at the side of the market-place, nearly in the centre of the Grande Place, we discovered the identical object we sought.

An old fruit-woman lifted her basket from the top, where it rested, that we might examine and identify it; and, what her impression of us could have been, in common with that of her surrounding friends, we might judge by the astonished and pitying expression of their countenances as we knelt down to regard this singular stone nearer.

The Léach-ry, or Pierre *de la Crie*, as it is popularly called, is a block of fine-grained stone, which looks almost polished like marble, probably from long friction; in this are cut two steps, not more than nine inches high and

eight wide; the top of the altar is about one-and-twenty inches by seventeen square, all round which is a simple cornice of slight projection. It appears as if it must have sunk in the earth, as it is now of so inconsiderable an elevation; and the irregularity of the ground near it makes this conjecture probable enough. How this stone came to be spared when the market-square was newly paved and arranged, seems singular, but probably some ancient usage preserved it, and it is useful to the market-people as a place on which to sit or to rest their panniers. It probably was once surmounted by a cross, but nothing now appears to tell of its destination.

There are not many traces left of the numerous monuments erected at Bourges by the Romans, except in the names of some of the streets, a few walls, and the bases of some towers.

In the Place des Arènes are many cellars belonging to the different houses, which are of that early period, if not constructed by the Gauls long before. Those of the Séminaire and of the convent of Ursulines are similar.

In the Rue d'Auron may be seen two fine capitals of columns supposed to have formed part of a temple of great importance. Four

aqueducts can still be traced in the neighbourhood of the town.

Along the ramparts in the old wall may be seen a chain of Roman brick, particularly on the promenade Sérancourt. There was formerly a proverb which said:

> Bourges, Autun, le Mans, avec Limouges
> Furent jadis les quatres villes rouges,

alluding to the fact of each of these towns being built of brick.

Near the Porte St. Michel is a doorway of very remarkable beauty, which formerly belonged to the church of St. Ursin. The ornamental details are in the most entire preservation, and it is impossible to describe their perfection. The arch of this door is circular. The tympanum is filled with bas-reliefs, the subject of one of which is Esop's fable of the wolf and the stork: another represents a hog in a chariot drawn by geese, and one an ass burthened and a bear who is eating. Then come pictures in stone of a wild boar hunt, the figures of great purity. In the lower part is a rural calendar or zodiac: two columns support this part, which must have belonged to the same temple. An inscription in the centre of the frieze is as follows:—

Giraldus fecĕt istas portas.

The whole is of extreme elegance and grace, and is a most precious *morceau* of antiquity.

The Sainte Chapelle of Bourges, a monument of the liberality of Duke Jean le Magnifique, celebrated for many ages, has entirely disappeared: in the museum is a beautiful model or archetype of it in wood, of great antiquity, which displays in an admirable manner its splendour and richness. The few tombs saved in its wreck I have named before, as existing in the crypt of the cathedral.

In the museum also are many of the *statuettes* which adorned the tomb of the magnificent duke.

I must not forget to mention one of the pieces of antique furniture preserved in the museum, which struck us, namely, an elaborately carved ebony cabinet, supported by columns of fine workmanship, each a *torso* figure; this came from the castle of Bois-sire-amé, formerly belonging to Agnès Sorel.

This château was situated in a thick forest near Bourges, and was given by Charles VII. to his adored Agnès, who gave it the romantic name it bore. It was from the height of these towers that Agnès made signals to her royal lover at his château of Mehun-sur-Yevre at eight leagues distance.

We saw a curious engraving of this ancient castle of Mehun, which is now entirely destroyed, though once a great object of interest to amateurs who visited Bourges. It came to Duke Jean le Magnifique when he was named Duke of Auvergne and Berry, and returned to the crown after his death, when it became the favourite residence of Charles VII., who rebuilt and beautified it.

Whatever blame may attach to their intercourse, the enamoured king and his beautiful mistress had the grace to surround themselves with mystery; for, wherever traces are shown of them, secret ways, subterranean passages, and other evidences of secresy are found, proving that they at least

> "Assumed a virtue if they had it not."

From his tower of Mehun, at an hour agreed upon, Charles looked to Bois-sire-amé, where, instead of the usual vases of flowers, was to be seen a burning torch, announcing different events. Every night and morning they told each other of their rising, and said "good-night" by means of signals. It was in this very castle that the weak king, for such he must have been, starved himself to death, hav-

ing refused all nourishment, fearing to be poisoned by his son, the fearful dauphin, Louis.

A plan and designs are shown at the museum of the Dolmen, found at Mehun in 1836, near the castle, which the country-people call Pierre du Loup.

The country round Bourges is very pleasant, though of no remarkable beauty; the fields of corn and hemp which surround it have a rich effect, and the fine groves of walnut trees, with isolated trees growing amidst the corn, are very picturesque. The public walks and ramparts are open and agreeable, and the climate seems healthy and mild. We had a great deal of rain during our stay, but we thought the deluges, which rendered the neglected streets occasionally clean, scarcely to be regretted.

The names of some of the streets of Bourges amused us; amongst the most remarkable are the Rue de la Mère de Dieu, not far from the Rue du Dieu d'Amour.

The Rue de la Grosse Armée is where Charles VII. lodged his men whom he sent into the city, the camp being without the walls: adjoining it is the Rue de la Petite Armée.

The Rue d'Arqueny is a corruption of *Al-*

chimie, which tells a tale of deceived and deceiving adepts in an imaginary science. The Rue d'Auron leads to the river of that name, over which is a strange, antique *middle-age* looking bridge, which they are now in the act of removing to build a new one.

The Rue des Bons Hommes was so named from a somewhat singular cause. In 1147 and 1181 the missions in Languedoc, to convert the Albigeois, failed; reform made continual progress. Bertrand de Saissac, tutor of the young Count of Béziers, had espoused the new opinions; it soon spread beyond the bounds where it had been so long fermenting, and found in Berry and the Nivernais powerful partisans. From the year 1198, Innocent III. used the most energetic means, but was unable to destroy them; this continued till the *guerre des Camisards* under Louis XIV.! The people were displeased at these persecutions, and everywhere received with friendliness the victims of this religious tyranny, and some of the troubadours defended them in their songs. Many fled to and were kindly welcomed at Bourges, and to the street where they lived the name des Bons Hommes was given. It is remarkable that Calvin was a pupil of the uni-

versity of Bourges, and there imbibed the doctrines which he afterwards promulgated.

The Rue des Brigands was so called, from being the abode in 1411, of the armed peasants, who held themselves in readiness for war. In the time of Charles VII., the Duc de Boussac who had joined the English, lived here with the lords of his party. In later times coats of mail called *Brigandines* were fabricated here, and the workmen employed came to be called *brigands*.

In the Rue des Ceps, vines were formerly planted before the door of each house, as in the Faubourg la Riche at Tours.

The place called Fosse des Allemands, was so called from a melancholy accident which happened here. In 1536, the son of the elector of Bavaria, aged twenty-five, who was a student at the University, was drowned in the River d'Auron, in endeavouring to save his dog which had got entangled in the rushes. His servant, who tried to rescue his master, perished with him.

The Rue St. Pierre le Guillard owes its name to a miracle; a Jew named Guillard had a dispute with St. Anthony of Padua; and in order that he might be convinced of his error, the mule on which he rode prostrated itself before an altar by the way-side. On this the Jew embraced the Saint's religion, and caused

a church to be built on the spot, dedicated to St. Pierre, and bearing his own name likewise.

In the Rue du vieux Poirier lives Don Carlos. The name of this street alludes not to an old *pear-tree*, but to the ancient *emporium* or market which used to be held here.

A superstition, not yet entirely destroyed in the villages near, but probably little credited now by the *enlightened* townspeople, is that a creature, who possesses two natures, is in the habit of going about the streets at night wrapped in the skin of a bear, and shaking chains. In the day it assumes the form of a man. It is called *la Grande Bête*, and was formerly an object of great terror in Berry.

At Sancerre the *bugbear* is the ghost of a wild beast, called *la grande et la petite Birette*, which appears sometimes large, and sometimes small.

Amongst the many great men that Bourges has produced, one of the most distinguished is Bourdaloue, who was born here in 1632. Louis XIV. said to him "Mon père, j'aime mieux vos redites que les nouveautés des autres." His life was as admirable as his sermons.

At short distances around Bourges may be found numerous ruined châteaux of much interest, whose venerable remains give a picturesque charm to the scenery. Amongst these is Aubigny-

sur-Nerre, where stand the walls of a castle granted by Charles VII. to a Scotch knight, named John Stuart, who fortified and reconstructed the surrounding town, protecting it with deep ditches, long since filled up. The gardens of the castle now form a public promenade. There is still a portrait to be seen there of this *Jean Stuart*, and a gallery painted in fresco, representing chivalric scenes of the period, with inscriptions which offer considerable interest. During the troubles of the League the Maréchal de la Châtre besieged Aubigny, but it was valiantly defended by the inhabitants, under the direction of Catherine de Balzac d'Entragues, widow of Messire Edmé Stuart Duke of Lenox, and dowager of Aubigny; who commanded, like another Jeanne Hachette, during the siege.

The town of Aubigny is remarkable for its curious wooden houses of very early date; there are a great many still left, but they are fast disappearing in this age of improvement. The church was formerly rich in pictures painted on wood, presented at different times by the Stuart family; some of these have been *hewn in pieces to make benches!*—a few have escaped, and are to be seen in the Museum of Bourges.

The ruins of a feudal castle exist, also, at

Baugy, a small neighbouring town, where two immense *fossés* can yet be traced, one of which was at least sixty feet wide. This castle was besieged and taken several times, during the civil wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Boisbelle is a pretty village embosomed in trees, where *it is said* Henry IV., stopping at a fountain, beheld a pretty young country girl, who was drinking at the well — his supposed words to her have given name to the place, for he with much gallantry entreating her not to allow his presence to disturb her, exclaimed *Bois, belle.* Unfortunately for this pretty story, Boscobellum was known long before the time of the royal admirer of beauty.

In the *commune* of Dampierre are the remains of the once magnificent Château de la Croisette, one of the most formidable in the environs; there are some fine towers of great size and strength, prodigious vaulted caves and subterranean ways, of extraordinary extent. It was built probably in the fifteenth century, and was possessed by a chief, called le Grand Gaucher, lord of Pessac; whose fine tomb is still in the chapel, which once belonged to the Abbey de la Prée. The castle passed into many families, some of whom were probably Protestant, as ap-

pears from a stone pulpit, built against the wall in one of the apartments.

Along all the course of the road leading to Néris are frequent traces of the Romans: scarcely a village or town occurs in the neighbourhood at which discoveries, more or less extensive, have not been made; sites of amphitheatres, fragments of columns and statues, medals and pavements, are continually found. At Drevant, for instance, immense riches of this description have rewarded the labours of the learned, and M. de Cayluss has given very interesting accounts of them. Mérimée has also recently described the wonders of Drevant, where the two feet of a colossal bronze statue, of exquisite execution, were not long since brought to light in a part of the baths, which appear to have been here of great extent and importance. The numerous bracelets of copper, medals, and wooden hatchets found here would seem to establish the supposition, that the country was inhabited by a Celtic colony: a very curious fortification on a hill, on the opposite bank of the Cher, appears also to have been constructed by a people ruder than the Romans, of whom several camps are to be traced, and part of an aqueduct still seen on the way to Montluçon.

Dun le Roi is another *museum* of Celtic and

Roman wonders. The *castellum*, some walls of which crown the high hill above the town, was built into a fortress in the time of Francis I. Here a mysterious prisoner was brought from the town of Issoudun, who was thought to be of illustrious birth, but whose exalted rank did not save him from a cruel fate, for he was put in a sack and thrown into the river Auron from the tower of Dun le Roi; what was his crime or his misfortune was never known, but his unquiet spirit long haunted the ruins of the castle where he was kept in durance.

Charles VII. occupied this castle; but that which is most a cause of pride to its walls is, that a saint of Berry Ste. Chantal once slept here. The sheets of the bed in which she reposed were long carefully preserved, and fragments of them were thought efficacious if placed in the bed of a woman in her confinement.

The walls, towers, and enormous *fossés* of Dun le Roi are fast disappearing: very recently a beautiful tower was entirely razed, and in a few years there will probably be little left of its once important and splendid fortifications. The church of St. Etienne is extremely curious and interesting, though greatly defaced by time and violence. Here are found lithographic stones of remarkably fine texture.

Near Eloy de Gy is a little *castel*, formerly belonging to Agnès Sorel. A good deal of antique furniture of her time is kept here; a *sécrétaire*, finely sculptured with heads, and having blue enamelled coats of arms, with golden ornaments, is amongst the number. There is also a toilet table of cedar wood curiously carved; and a large cabinet, the cornice of which is supported by figures of Charles VII. as Mars, and Agnès as Venus. A very interesting portrait of Agnès in wood is preserved, and one of Charles VII. as Hercules, whose warriors are entreating him to abandon Omphale: at the base, in golden letters, are these words: "Véritable Portraicture de Hercule emmailloté de peau de lion, donné par le roi à la tendre Agnès, 1451."

CHAPTER III.

St. Amand-Montrond.

THE country between Bourges and St. Amand-Montrond, which was our next destination on our way to Néris les Bains, though rich and highly cultivated, possesses no remarkable beauty. Its pastures are very fine, and the sheep they nourish are esteemed for their wool and the good flavour of the mutton, which is certainly rather less tasteless here than usual.

St. Amand is a remarkably clean and pretty little town, situated at the confluence of the Marmande and the Cher, on a branch of the canal. We were desirous, on arriving, to see the ruined castle fortified by Sully, and set out in search of it. While we were inquiring our way, a passer-by, observing we were strangers, stopped suddenly in his hurried walk, and addressing us, offered to be our guide to the mount where the ruins stood. We accepted his offer, but, for an instant as we went along,

having glanced at his appearance, were almost sorry we had done so; for, slovenly as Frenchmen frequently are, there was something singularly dirty and threadbare in his costume, and his hands, which at first I thought were covered with dark gloves, were of a deep mulberry colour, nearly black, which, as he waved them about with vehement gesticulations, had an effect so strange, that visions of La Grande Bête, or of brigands, floated involuntarily in our minds, though we did not communicate the unworthy thought.

We were not long permitted to wrong our companion, for we had not walked the length of a street before he allowed us to become aware that he was *the* author of St. Amand, the editor of the weekly paper, and moreover, he might have added, the printer *par excellence;* but that we understood, without words, by his ink-stained hands.

He could speak a few words of English; had been in London, employed by Châteaubriand on a literary mission; was warm in praise of English hospitality, and professed his happiness at being able to return the civilities he had received, by offering them to all strangers from that land which he so much admired. His eloquence was unbounded: he related all his his-

tory in the course of our walk; he uttered his anathemas against the barbarians who had razed the castle and laid out the terraces in gardens; he recited, quoted, told anecdotes, related adventures,—in fact, kept up such a stream of talk that we were almost stunned, and could scarcely enjoy the beautiful scenery which is spread in a panorama round the fine hills of Montrond.

While we were asking about the towers and walls, and admiring the sunset and its effect on the valley below, our energetic companion was entreating our attention to a plan he drew with his stick, in the dust of the court of the great tower, of Great Portland Street, where he lodged; and the embassy, where he found the servants living on salmon; and the chapel near Oxford Street;—all this on the site of the castle where lived Charles d'Albret, Sully and le Grand Condé! He loaded us with pamphlets of which he was the author, and charged us to conceal them on meeting a party of towns-people, as he remarked that he wished to remain incognito.

St. Amand has preserved the memory of its feudal state in an institution, which here, as in many other places, has given rise to much disturbance.

That which now belongs to the people of St. Amand was formerly a right of the Lord of Montrond. The head of the institution is called Le Roi de la Brétolle, whose functions the following account will explain.

If a widow or widower marry again, on the evening of the day when the first banns are published, the populace assembles, and in all the streets and faubourgs of St. Amand is heard the sound of bells, and horns, and noisy instruments of the rudest kind. Children, chimney-sweepers, and all sorts of rabble flock at the noise; they unite their forces in some public place, and there sing songs of their own composition, full of abuse of the new couple, and ending each verse with hooting and hallooing. They then repair to the houses of the affianced pair, and there remain, making this frightful tumult as long as they please, which generally is till late after midnight. This riot goes on for several days during the publication of the banns.

When the wedding day arrives, they intrude themselves amongst the marriage guests with the same noise and violence; and at night they literally besiege the house with stones, brickbats, and every kind of missile. Sometimes the patience of the inmates is exhausted, and they

sally forth, when dangerous struggles occasionally arise amongst the contending parties.

This disgraceful custom has, however, now fallen into disuse, but from time to time the people attempt to revive it, when the magistrates are obliged to use their authority to prevent disorder.

The route from St. Amand to Montluçon is very agreeable by the banks of the Cher, on which are to be seen, and on the heights around, the remains of numerous châteaux, which give a picturesque appearance to the scene. The Bourbonnais and Berry are strewn with these fine ruins, which crown every hill. Amongst them Château Meillant is conspicuous, where formerly existed a *grosse tour de Mélusine*, that mysterious lady with a serpent's tail,* "ange par la figure et serpent par le reste," who has puzzled the learned for so many centuries; a few immensely thick walls still frown amongst the vines where once the ancient castle rose, near the *Lake of Merlin*.

A building, comparatively modern, built in 1500, occupies its site, which belonged to Charles d'Amboise, seigneur of Chaumont, whose *armes*

* M. Francisque Michel is about to publish very shortly, at Niort, some learned and curious researches on the subject of Mélusine, which cannot fail to prove extremely interesting, and will doubtless throw new light on this mysterious fable.

parlantes of mountains in flames appear on the façade. The spiral staircases are contained in ornamented *tourelles* outside the main structure; these are, however, much less graceful and delicate than those of Jacques Cœur's house, the architecture of which is closely copied in Château Meillant. There are sculptured figures of soldiers on the towers, apparently ready to throw blocks of stone on assailants. The Château of Anay le Vieux is also in a charming position.

We passed through several pretty villages: that of Iray possesses a picturesque church, with a fine portal with circular arches. The village of Vallon is beautifully situated; its lofty stone spire rises amongst the embowering trees almost like an English hamlet and its church. The fine Château of Arvaux on a height commands the country round, and the towers of Montluçon crown the high hill above the town.

Montluçon is one of the most ancient towns of the Bourbonnais, and has suffered as much as most of them. It was on the frontier of the English possessions in the fourteenth century, and was a constant source of contention. Some of the strong ancient fortifications remain; and numerous towers are scattered here and there, peaceably resting in the gardens of the inhabitants, and forming platforms for pretty summer-houses.

The donjon stands on a fine hill, from whence a grand and varied view is obtained for leagues round. Some of the interior apartments of the castle are preserved, and used for different purposes. One fine tower is being now demolished, and a new prison is to be erected in its place. There exists an extensive wooden gallery, once beautifully ornamented with painted and gilded rafters, which runs along the whole remaining façade of the castle, and looked into the large court, now planted with trees as a public promenade From this gallery, doubtless, the assembled ladies were accustomed to regard the feats of knights in the tourney; and here they promenaded in wet weather, as it must have been sheltered from storm and danger. It is built of chestnut, as is also all the wood-work of the roofs, and has a venerable and majestic appearance. We grieved to hear that it was in contemplation to remove it, to admit of some alterations required for public purposes.

We found all bustle at Montluçon, as a few fine days had attracted visitors to Néris les Bains, and carriages were in requisition to convey them there. Néris is less than two leagues off, but the road is very hilly and rugged, and the drive is rather tedious in consequence.

We found some difficulty in getting received

at Néris, as the boarding-houses were very full; but were fortunate at last in our choice, and passed several days at this pretty little watering-place very agreeably. Though the usual slovenliness prevails in many respects, yet on the whole the accommodations are good: there is a great attempt at style and fashion in all the boarding-houses, and a good deal of ceremony. Several persons of rank, French and Russian, were there; a ball and concert were on the *tapis*, and Néris was as gay as possible.

The baths are very good and abundant, and the establishment would be handsome if it was finished; but, as only half the design of the building is carried out, it has an unsightly effect. There is a great deal of screaming and calling, confusion and hurry in the attendance; but the excellence of the baths themselves makes up for the numerous inconveniences to which the visitor is exposed from doors without locks, windows without curtains, sudden incursions of strangers seeking for lost bonnets and shawls, and a *charivari*, without, worthy of La Brétolle.

Néris was well known to the Romans, as numerous remains of Roman temples and pavements testify.

The environs are charming; the walks amongst the thymy and corn-covered hills delightful; the

little woods and valleys rural and pleasant in the extreme; and accidents of waterfall and rock form subjects for a painter, of peculiar beauty.

The visitors at the boarding-houses at Néris meet in a *salon*, which is usually ornamented and furnished gaily with musical instruments, books, and prints for the amusement of the community. Here acquaintances may be made, and *eternal friendships* begun, as appeared to be the case in the establishment where we remained. A very pretty young French girl was introduced to me by her new friend of a month, in consequence of her being able to speak English fluently; and her sentimental *prôneuse* was anxious to exhibit her talent to the assembled world of Néris. She accosted me in some guttural language, which I had considerable difficulty in recognising as my own, and I found that she was utterly unable to understand a word I said in reply; accordingly, I interlarded my remarks with French words whenever I saw her at fault, and this plan succeeded admirably, as I had often found before. Everybody was delighted at the fluency of my young acquaintance's English, and surprised that they understood the language so well themselves: it was settled that the English tongue was not so difficult as was generally supposed, and bore a great

resemblance to French. A lady from Issoudun, who was at Néris with her daughters for the season of the baths, professed much knowledge of English customs and manners, and I heard her tell a gentleman with a red riband, from Châteauroux, that in England the country was perfectly flat, and that in that strange region there were no springs either hot or cold: the *decoré* shrugged his shoulders with pity, when Prince ———, a Russian, who is as well known at our watering-places as at Paris, and who was looked upon as the great man of the society, struck them all dumb by suddenly contradicting the assertion, and overwhelming them with descriptions of Bath, Cheltenham, Harrowgate, and a host of other places, which he told them were immeasurably superior in all respects to any baths in France. This turned the tables in our favour, and the conversation instantly fell, as it seldom fails in France to do, without any regard to delicacy or politeness, on the enormous riches of the English. One gentleman, evidently well-informed on the subject, assured his hearers that every one with us was either a millionnaire, or sunk in the most abject poverty; that we had no middle class, and no persons in easy circumstances, owing to the unequal distribution of property.

Imagining, I suppose, that we must belong to the former class, he began to ask us very home questions as to our prospects, intentions, circumstances, &c.; at which we were far from being surprised, having become accustomed to this sort of catechising from one end of France to the other. The *decoré* inquired if our carriage was very *comfortable*, fitted up with all sorts of conveniences; if we had a good courier, and meant to stay long at Néris; what our complaints were, and why we had come here, *if it was true* we could have got baths at home. Having satisfied him, and the company in general, that we were perfectly well, were only passing through Néris, did not care at all about a convenient carriage, but took anything we could get, and preferred walking whenever there were objects worthy of curiosity, we found that every one was strangely puzzled, and saw by the shrugs and looks of each individual that our *bizarrerie* was a source of entertainment not unmixed with contempt. "As for walking here," said a little thin sick woman, with a sharp shrewish face, "*ces dames* will find no opportunity; Néris is the most hideous place in the world. I wonder what induced my husband to bring me here; I have never stirred out of the house since I came, *à quoi bon*, in such scenery!"

A very agreeable old Parisian lady whispered to us that Madame was sick and cross; but, though she had herself never been out of the town, she understood the country round was really pretty. We resolved to judge for ourselves, being perfectly aware that the only beauty French people ever appreciate is a handsome *salon*, and a public walk with stunted trees, where they can sit about on dusty chairs, and talk *riens* with their neighbours. As a proof of this, close to the bath-rooms was a plantation, at the entrances to which a row of squalid beggars sat muttering prayers and telling their beads, presenting disgusting spectacles, and watching the approach of visitors, to make their pious meditations apparent: here the *élite* of the company was always to be seen lounging; while a beautiful garden *à l'Anglaise*, a few hundred yards from the town, was entirely neglected.

This public walk is prettily arranged on the site of a Roman amphitheatre; the paths running along where once were the raised seats of the spectators, and beautiful shrubs and trees planted in circles above the arena. On the highest part a ruined tower and wall of Roman construction is still seen, and there is a charming view of the pleasant country round.

One of our long walks was amongst the pretty

woods and corn-fields, which rise precipitously from the borders of a brawling torrent, which forms picturesque cascades here and there, and is heard murmuring in all directions amongst its leafy coverts.

We had strayed very far, and, wishing to return by a shorter way, got involved in a shady labyrinth, when we suddenly came upon a copse which led down to the stream, whose hoarse voice we heard below as it struggled over the rugged stones which impeded its course. Owing to late rains, the water was very abundant, and we stood on the edge uncertain how we should cross, the stepping stones being quite covered: a peasant man in large wooden shoes came wading through, but, when we asked him to assist us, he only stared vacantly, and, splashing on, left us in our dilemma. Going a little farther on, we observed on the other side a group of washerwomen, seated *al fresco* in a circle under the shade of some fine trees: they were taking their simple repast of rye bread, almost black and very moist, milk and water, and cold *omelette;* the bright colours of their costume, their sunburnt faces and cheerful expression of countenance, made them almost pretty, and very picturesque, as they sat surrounded by the snowy heaps of linen, which was their charge, and ap-

peared to enjoy the cessation of their labour. One lively-looking woman immediately started up, and came to the edge of the stream to help us over; she rolled larger stones into the water, and giving us her hard sunburnt hand, which was ample support, we were soon safely landed, and joined her party on the other side.

These people manage to gain a good deal by washing for the strangers at the baths during the season, which, if it is good, supplies them with means to get through the winter; their condition after a bad season, which this had proved, is lamentable enough, as Néris is far from any great town, and offers but few resources: they seem however cheerful and light-hearted, and in our lively group of *lavandières* we saw only the present, and that was all apparent happiness and content.

The scene reminded us of some of those in Don Quixote, where travellers come suddenly upon a rural party, eating by a bright stream, enjoying the fresh shade after a hot day, such as this had been.

There is a great deal of box in this neighbourhood, and the numerous and almost interminable lanes which branch off in all directions are closed in with high bushes of this evergreen, which has a singular effect to those accustomed to see it

only in a dwarf state. We spent some time in the church at Néris, which is very curious both exteriorly and interiorly; the columns and capitals which support the temple-shaped choir are very remarkable. The Roman eagle figures conspicuously amongst the ornaments; and some are as grotesque and strange as those at Loches, which they much resemble.

Leaving Néris, we set out in a carriage, with some of the worst horses that were ever seen, on our route to Clermont-Ferrand.

The approach to Auvergne is marked by a sudden change of country, which here begins to be bold and grand. Rugged and imposing mountains rise majestically in the distance, and the road winds amongst them, disclosing, from time to time, deep gorges and ravines,—"mauvais terrain" as our companion in the *coupé*, who was not a lover of Nature in her savage garb, continued to call the scenery.

Volcanic appearances began to be evident; black dust and ashy blocks of dark rock piled confusedly in huge heaps to the sky, barren brown hills strewn with flinty mounds, precipices from which perpendicular walls of grey rock start suddenly forth, and every indication of commotion and confusion.

Near Menat we came to a romantic pass, halfway up a steep mountain, which we were nearly an hour mounting; and, having gained the top, a magnificent view of countless hills stretched before us. Below us, but placed on a stupendous height, and surrounded by rugged rocks on all sides, stood the fine castle of Blot, in a position which would seem to render it almost inaccessible.

Here, after passing through a fine wood, as we were descending a hill, the sudden apparition of a young wolf stealing across the road, and then rushing into the covert, completed the savage aspect of the place, and ushered us into Auvergne.

Just before we arrived at St. Pardoux, on reaching a high point, a gigantic shadow, transparent and purple in the distance, seemed to rear its huge form at the back of a long range of mountains, making them all sink into insignificance. By its side, on each hand, was a huge companion; but the form in the centre far overtopped them, even though its head was enveloped in clouds.

We became instantly aware that the Puy de Dôme was before us; and every moment, as we hurried along, new mountains, which rendered

all we had passed mere mole-hills, rose crowding on the sight in every variety of form and colour.

Far away, on one hand, stretched the chain of the Monts Dores;* above them all the Pic de Sancy piercing the clouds, the fine range of the Monts Dômes filling up the rest of the landscape, and extending their irregular line along the horizon.

We were now in the department to which the great mountain of the Puy de Dôme gives its name, and had entered the valley, or rather plain, of La Limagne, which covers the country for near five-and-twenty leagues.

Here begin the fine pastures, so much vaunted; and here ended the *mauvais terrain*, which so much distressed our companion.

We arrived at Riom, the second city of Auvergne, and the rival of Clermont.

"Riom, chef glorieux de cette terre grasse,
Que l'on nomme Limagne, au lieu d'Auvergne basse."

Riom is famous for the miracles of St. Amable, who made the sun his *valet-de-chambre;* a ray

* The name of these mountains is erroneously written Monts d'Or; all learned writers now agree to give them the appellation of Monts Dores from the river Dore, which has its rise amongst them.

carrying, says the legend, his gloves and mantle, and *obeying him like a faithful servant.* The saint appears to have been very sensitive to bad odours; for a woman entering the church where his tomb was placed, carrying a lamp with bad oil, the offended Amable caused her to fall down dead instantly. How he would have supported Auvergne at the present day it is difficult to conceive.

The town does not deserve its appellation of Riom le beau, for a more dingy, ugly, black, uninteresting place I never beheld. It is built of the dark stone of Volvic, a quarry near, of which most of the towns in Auvergne are constructed, and which, growing almost black with years, has a most dismal and melancholy effect.

By a very fine road we continued our way, and, passing through the strange-looking distant *faubourg* of Mont-Ferrand, arrived at its neighbour and master, the capital of Auvergne.

CHAPTER IV.

Capital of Auvergne.—La Limagne.—Clermont.—Mont-Ferrand.—Temple of Mercury.—The Cathedral.—Nôtre Dame du Port.—Jardin des Plantes.—Library.—The Puys.—St. Alyre.

THE large and important town of Clermont-Ferrand stands in the midst of the extensive and fertile plain of La Limagne; a district that spreads out a wide garden, rich in every production, abounding and exulting in its gorgeousness, and loading the country with its teeming stores. This celebrated plain is situated nearly in the centre of France, and sends its riches to all parts of the kingdom: it is bordered with high mountains which rise suddenly into existence, and grow higher and higher till they are overtopped by some more elevated than all the rest; and amongst them, far above every other, and rendering the highest insignificant, frowns from its throne of mist the huge mass called, *par excellence*, Le Puy de Dôme. This extraordinary and magnificent mountain is beheld at many leagues' distance

from all parts, and at Clermont appears close to the town, though a league and a half from it. The immense chains of Le Forez are ranged opposite to the line of the Monts Dômes, and the river Allier runs peaceably at their feet.

O champs de la Limagne! O fortuné séjour!—

so long celebrated by poets and philosophers, where the Roman conquerors of the world chose themselves rural retreats, and built cities on the ruins left by powerful barbarians,—a spot which Sidonius Apollinaris describes as a "region "so beautiful that strangers, charmed with its aspect, forget at once their own country, and are unable to quit the scenes of enchantment it presents,"—a region which King Childebert desired to behold above all other things before he died, having heard it described as "a marvel of nature and a terrestrial paradise!" It must not, however, be forgotten, in the enthusiasm of admiration which this wonderful plain excites, that the reason why King Childebert, after he had passed through La Limagne, uttered this memorable wish, was that it was so entirely enveloped in fog that no part of it was visible. The climate is, in fact, very uncertain, in consequence of the proximity of the mountains; and one great cause of the emerald ver-

dure which adorns so large a portion of its extent, is the existence of extensive *marshes*, at some seasons dangerous to life, and only beautiful at a distance. The fine and delicate, healthy and charming turf which adorns the hills and vales of England is entirely unknown in France; and, being without it, fair Limagne possesses less attractions to an English amateur than it might otherwise do. From the heights above nothing can appear more attractive, but it is only to the eye afar off; there are few walks and rides and mossy seats and silvan nooks to be found, and if one should be tempted to descend from the elevated position from whence the vast country around is contemplated, disappointment must ensue. Even on quitting the town of Clermont, from whose high-raised terraces are seen flowering gardens and luxuriant meadows tempting to stray beyond the limits of the city—alas! for nearly a league one must wade through dust and between walls before there is a hope of reaching the paradise beyond, which, like the fabled gardens of Irem, are sought in vain; we were, at least, less fortunate than Colabah, the camel-seeker, who caught a glimpse of the abode of happiness; gardens there are, indeed, but only producing vegetables for the markets, and

so carefully and profusely manured, that their vicinity is to be avoided in all haste. Nevertheless, there is not a hill of all the lower range, which forms a base to those more exalted beyond, which does not present scenes of beauty and grandeur difficult to be matched; and varied and lovely are the ways upon the heights which command this singular district. It would be endless to enumerate the points from whence these views may be obtained; but they abound, and are well worth seeking.

Approaching Clermont from Riom, the road lies between fine avenues and picturesque views to the ancient steep and extraordinary town of Mont-Ferrand, whose houses are perched on heights reached by flights of steps in terraces, and whose narrow, dirty, black, and inconvenient streets present an appearance the most disagreeable that can well be imagined. The awkwardness of its position is very remarkable, lying as it does exactly in the way of all approach, offering a hill dangerously precipitous, and deforming the country with its squalid hideousness, as if in determined contrast to the plain which surrounds it. When once passed, however, at a distance the towers of the antique church rising from amongst its lofty buildings have an imposing and pleasing

effect. Mont-Ferrand was united to Clermont under Louis XIII., and from that period the latter has been designated Clermont-Ferrand.

In the middle ages Mont-Ferrand was one of the strongest places in Auvergne. It is called in ancient titles Mont-Ferrand *le Fort*, as Clermont was called *le Riche*, and Riom *le Beau*. It was surrounded with thick walls flanked with solid towers, and large deep ditches always full of water. There were but four doors to the town, each of which had a drawbridge supported by massive iron chains:

> " Or, en ce temps de discordes civiles,
> Où sans ramparts il n'étoit point de villes,
> Ni de rocher sans donjon, sans brigand,
> Il falloit voir les murs de Mont-Ferrand."

The women of Mont-Ferrand have been celebrated for their heroism; and in 1793, when all the men capable of bearing arms departed for the siege of Lyons, the women, in order to guard the town and its provisions, formed a band of national guards composed of four companies, having each a captain, officers, under-officers, corporals, and drummers. They were armed with pikes, and were obliged to perform regular duty, which they did in a most exemplary manner. Night and day they had sentinels posted at the gates of the town, to

arrest malefactors, and the female captain of the guard examined the passports of travellers.

All the fine churches, convents, and public buildings of Mont-Ferrand have disappeared, except the church dedicated to Nôtre Dame de Prospérité, which is a fine Gothic edifice, and makes a good figure in the general view of the town from the surrounding heights.

"In 1436 the Gascons and Provençaux formed a plan to surprise this then important town. They sent soldiers, disguised as merchants, to examine its position, and to hire shops in which to deposit their pretended merchandize. They made choice of a deaf and dumb man, who was known to them, with whom to lodge, thinking that their schemes would be less likely to be detected in his house. They lost no time in introducing into the town carts laden with barrels, and cases full of powder, balls, muskets, and swords, which they declared to contain herrings, oil, and oranges to be sold at the approaching fair. But the dumb man, observing by their gestures „that all was not right, and judging with the quickness of persons afflicted as he was, that a conspiracy was on foot, contrived to warn the consuls, who immediately caused the packages to be visited, and discovered all.

The arms and ammunition were transported to the arsenal of the town, and the pretended merchants were all tried and hung, with the exception of one, who had quitted Mont-Ferrand to inform his comrades that they had succeeded in introducing their supposed goods. The news of the discovery reached the hostile bands, who judged it prudent to desist from their proposed attack.

Froissart tells a story of a knight called Bonnelance, who, being at Mont-Ferrand in the company of the ladies, was solicited by them to signalise himself by some feat of arms against the English, who ravaged the country at this period. One of these ladies, who looked with an eye of favour on Bonnelance, expressed a wish to have *an Englishman prisoner*. The knight, resolved to gratify his fair enslaver, sallied forth, and, like a *preux* of old, brought back several captives, which he led to her feet, saying:—"You desired one, here are several Englishmen. I give them to you to keep till they find means to pay you their ransom." The ladies were delighted, and gave Bonnelance *grand merci*, and he received the reward of his courtesy by being admitted to the amusements and gaieties given by the ladies for three days in Mont-Ferrand.

In the cathedral of the capital of Auvergne might formerly be read, on the day of the fête of St. Bonnet, the following verses of an ancient breviary :—

Auvergne riche en moyens,
Peuplée de citoyens,
Devers l'orient ouverte,
Et vers l'occident couverte,
Renommée des beaux faicts,
Qu'en temps de guerre elle a faicts,
Clairmont elle est appelée,
En son église est gardée
La chasuble de Saint Bonnet,
Qu'on ne voit si feste il n'est.

Pliny the naturalist, and Gregory of Tours speak, as of one of the seven wonders of the world, of the famous and magnificent temple of Mercury, which existed here, built of porphyry and marble, adorned with mosaics and filled with riches, possessing a statue of the god, of gilt bronze, larger than the Colossus of Rhodes. Almost all its buildings of that period of its glory are swept away, and the greater part of its monuments of later ages; yet the position of its *centre town*, a few of its temples, and its general appearance, make it a place of singular interest and curiosity. No town in France possesses greater and more extensive advantages, none might be more mag-

nificent, none can be placed in a finer, more commanding, or more beautiful situation, few are surrounded with such riches, or can boast of peasantry more at their ease; yet it is difficult to find a worse built, worse arranged, more slovenly, or more ugly collection of buildings than its irregular mass presents. The cathedral was never finished; and being built of the dark stone from the neighbouring quarry of Volvic, as are most of the old houses, it has a dingy, gloomy look, and is so hemmed in by mean habitations, that it does not inspire the usual reverence which a temple so ancient ordinarily excites. There is a good deal of fine painted glass in the windows, and the form of the choir is graceful; but the delicacy of the pillars is spoilt by the prevailing bad taste of the inhabitants, being painted grey, and so daubed, that the capitals have lost all their sharpness. The whole has a poor and unsatisfactory appearance, and does not detain the stranger long beneath its roof. Piety is not a remarkable characteristic in this part of Auvergne; and the levity and want of decency and respect observed by the townspeople in entering the holy precincts, is very striking: the cathedral is made a mere passage from one street to another, standing as it does in

the very middle of the way. Since the recent disturbances, I understand that the cathedral has been converted into a barrack, where the military have taken up their quarters!

A more interesting monument exists in the curious church of Nôtre Dame du Port, formerly called Sainte Marie Principale. It was built about 580, and possesses a remarkable and very fine crypt beneath the choir, where is still venerated, *i. e.* by a few female devotees, a miraculous *Vierge noire*, which, tradition says, was found in a well, still seen on the spot, and covered with an antique carved stone. The shrine of the black virgin is covered with gilding, and lighted with perpetual lamps, but the crypt is as light and dry as possible. Its heavy pillars, with their rude capitals, sharp, fresh, and massive, and its strong roof, seem to defy time or barbarism to destroy them. It is the exterior of the church, however, which attracts the admiring attention of the antiquary, from the exquisitely beautiful and elaborate decoration, in mosaic, of its towers, in the finest style of the Byzantine architecture of the Lower Empire. These ornaments are frequently to be met with on the churches in Auvergne, but nowhere are their details seen in such perfection as at Nôtre Dame du Port Over the

southern portal are still some very curious but much mutilated bas-reliefs, and every part of the church deserves minute observation, although it is so pressed and obstructed by dirty lanes and paltry buildings as to be almost concealed from view. Its fine towers, with their fresh-looking patterns, bright as if quite new, appear from the boulevards, and tempt the curious; but it is a work of time and difficulty to thread the mazes of filthy streets which conduct to them, and obtain a position from whence they can be studied with effect.

None of the other churches of Clermont are interesting; that of St. Pierre, in an angle of the slovenly and enormous Place de Jaude, which ought to be fine, is hideous to behold.

In the chapel of the ancient convent of barefooted Carmelites, which still exists at the entrance of the cemetery of the town, is a very precious piece of antiquity, now used as an altar, and covered with the usual embroidered muslin, which must be removed to reveal its beauty. It is a marble sarcophagus, covered with superb carving, and offers three sides, perfectly preserved and admirably executed. The explanation of its figures might well employ the attention of the learned.

In the upper part of the Jardin des Plantes

is a reserved space, where numerous morsels of antiquity are grouped together, and here may be seen other bas-reliefs, masks, fragments of pillars, capitals, and different remains of Roman skill. The most precious is, however, a stone, on which is represented in relief, the head of the (supposed) Gaulic Mercury, so often described, and the cause of such eternal disputes amongst the *savans* of Auvergne.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the position of the Jardin des Plantes and the Bibliothèque. On the decline of the hill, on part of which Clermont is built, the alleys of the garden sweep down the gentle slope, at every step disclosing one of the most glorious views it is possible to behold. On two sides a chain of mountains of every variety of height and form, and the rich plain of La Limagne spreading out far and wide. There is an equestrian group placed beneath the trees, representing the death of Désaix, a native of Clermont, which might do honour to an ancient sculptor, from its truth and expression. This faces the principal entrance, the gates of which are very fine, and look well from the wide street and *Place* without; but the garden, though small, is not well kept, and, except immediately near the hot-houses, is in a shabby, neglected state:

a circumstance much to be regretted, as there is every reason why it should be a most delicious retreat.

The library is tolerably good, but the *disturbative* guardian appears to think the readers intruders, and does all he can to interrupt the little study which goes on in the chamber where he continues his ceaseless walk up and down the creaking boards, while his heavy shoes tell at every step, and the sound jars on the nerves of the impatient visitor, who is allowed but a brief space to examine the works he requires to inform him of the wonders of the *little-erudite* town of Clermont, where all but the getting of money is considered waste of time. Clermont, nevertheless, possesses M. Lecocq, a man whose knowledge, science, and chemical discoveries are most valuable, and under whose auspices, and those of l'Abbé Lacoste, professor of Natural History, a very good cabinet has been formed. The works of M. Lecocq, on "The Monts Dômes" and the "Monts Dores," are extremely interesting, and of the highest importance; and his urbanity and readiness to afford information are a great resource to the stranger, cast away amidst the shoals of ignorance with which Clermont abounds. Close to the Jardin des Plantes is the Place called Du Taureau, near which is a column erected in

honour of General Désaix; and it is difficult to conceive anything more magnificent than the position of this place, and the broad street which leads from it, and is continued along another side of the upper town, descending gradually to the lower ground.

From this glorious elevation can be seen two points of view, the most extensive and beautiful which any town in France can boast. The *design* of the squares and streets is certainly deserving of great praise; but how is it executed? Palaces ought to adorn the streets so exquisitely placed, instead of the irregular, shabby, dirty, frightful buildings, more conspicuous from their exposure: there are only one or two buildings at all worthy of their situation, the Maison Dieu being one, and the Bibliothèque another—all between and beyond is mean, till the Prefecture, of majestic architecture, ends the fine street, and begins another equally well imagined and equally abortive in execution.

From this Place du Taureau the boundless Limagne is seen in immense extent, the Mountain de Chantourgue, and the tower-crowned height of Mont-Ferrand, the mountains of Forez, and, dim in the distance of seven leagues, the town of Thiers, which no one should miss seeing who enters Auvergne, not for its boasted paper-manufactories, but for its exquisite valleys and

stupendous rocks, unrivalled in the country; to the east and south are the bold mountains of Courcourt, the Puy de Mur, and the Puy de Dallet, bathed at their feet by the silver waters of the Allier. Intruding between the distant Gandaillet, Faucon, and Puy Long, rises the pretty little Puy de Crouël, distinct from the plain,—alone. The majestic Puy St. Romain, the forests of Vic le Comte, the famous plateau of Gergovia, where the armies of Cæsar encamped. Between two *puys* the square tower of the Château of Opine, the distinct Puy of Mont Rognon, and the ruins which crown its summit, an ancient possession of the dauphins of Auvergne, and before the mountain, built on the lava of the great Gravenoir, the pretty village of Beaumont. After gazing unsated on this gorgeous view, on advancing along the street before you, a sudden opening discloses, as by magic, the gigantic form which, in an instant eclipses all the glories of the rest—the Puy de Dôme, and a whole host of satellites at its feet, raises its majestic head and shows itself the monarch of all.

There is no want of immense squares in and round Clermont, nor of extensive boulevards planted with fine trees, but the backs of houses disfigure the latter, and the ugliness of the buildings, and the dust and slovenliness of the walks,

deform the former. The Place St. Herem commands a fine view, and has the Puy de Dôme exactly *en face*, but its avenues of trees are littered with stones and planks, left there in confusion, at all times making the promenade disagreeable.

The Place de Jaude, on the flat ground, is magnificent in extent, but of very irregular form, and surrounded with houses of every shape and size, all ugly and in the worst possible taste: a continual dust reigns here, and the heat, exposed as it is to the full strength of a powerful sun, is almost intolerable. Here is situated the Mairie, a building insignificant as to architecture.*

One of the curiosities of Clermont is the petrifying spring of the Faubourg St. Alyre, once peculiarly useful to the inhabitants of the famous monastery there, which was celebrated for the numerous *miracles* performed on the spot. All the objects now exhibited to the curious world, doubtless, in former days have been looked upon as supernatural, and the singular incrusting power of the wonderful foun-

* Since this was written Clermont has been in revolt; the Mairie was pillaged, and all its contents burnt in the Place de Jaude. We had fortunately left the town a short time previously to this outbreak.

tain was for ages represented as directed by the will of the saint who presided over the well. Like everything else at Clermont, to arrive at St. Alyre involves a struggle through filthy streets, ill-paved and interminable in their mazes, every turning leading to an alley more horrible than its fellow, and filthy beyond endurance: yet Clermont is, perhaps, better supplied with water than any town in France: there is not a place, a street, or a *ruelle*, which has not its fountain; a broad stream of clear water runs along the middle of every pavement, and as the streets descend to the plain torrents rush along, bearing with them every impurity, or rather they might do so, were it not apparently inherent in the Auvergnats to be the most slovenly, careless, and dirty people under the sun!

Some of their fountains are very fine; the grandest and most beautiful is that in the Place Delille, so named after the poet, a native of Clermont, a minstrel of the Hayley school, whose fame it is not worth while disputing about. This fountain was constructed in 1515 by the Bishop Jacques d'Amboise, and is of the most elegant style of the early period *de la renaissance*, equally admirable with numerous other erections due to the same family, on the banks of the Loire, and in different parts of France.



CHAPTER V.

Valley of Royat.—The Springs.—Market Days.—The Three Races.—Patois of Auvergne.—Guillaume Duprat.—The Battle of the Beards.—Montrognon.—Rock of Waifres.—Perils of the Vines.—Mazes.—Fades de Montjuzet.

All the waters of Clermont are supplied from an abundant spring at the village of Royat, whose valley, cascades, grottoes, antique church and cross, and picturesque position, are the theme of every inhabitant of this part of Auvergne. If, escaping by no very easy means, from the dust and bustle of cattle-crowded Clermont, the stranger manages, with infinite labour, to reach the summit of one of the beautiful mountains above Royat, he is enchanted with the appearance of the rich and luxuriantly-wooded valley beneath him; he sees the waters leaping and foaming between the trees, and hears their ceaseless murmur, longing to repose in the solitude of their secluded grottoes, and gaze on their glittering falls, seated near the rocks over which they force their way. But let him be content to dream all this, and care-

fully avoid descending, or his vision will be dispelled most unpleasantly. He will enter a stony village, more filthy than can be described, filled with clamorous inhabitants, men, women, and children, all vociferous in their offers to guide him down the slippery, rocky, muddy path which conducts to "*the* grotto"—a low rock, from which several streams of water issue, forming a basin, from whence they flow away into rocky beds, and run between large stones, now hidden by low hovels along the valley beneath. At the time when in a perfect state of nature, the grotto might have been discovered shaded by climbing shrubs, which veiled its entrance, the sources of its sparkling waters springing freshly from the rock, and foaming into the natural basin beneath, surrounded by rude masses of granite crowned with ancient trees—rocks above, below, and underneath, then the grotto of Royat, visited only by a few simple peasants in their pretty costume, and undisturbed by mill-wheels and dams, and unchoked with stepping-stones, must, indeed, have deserved all the rapturous praises bestowed upon it by the poets and painters of Auvergne; but now it presents little but a dirty wet cave, generally filled with importunate children, scolding guides, and tittering *badaud* visitors, who carve

their names upon the stone, and utter silly exclamations of terror or delight, "frightening the nymphs from their hallowed haunt" with most profane noise and clamour.

Fearful have been the ravages of this torrent in rainy seasons, and dreadful the loss of life and property which the accumulations of its waters have from time to time occasioned; the mills on its banks, or rather over its course have been swept away, and whole families destroyed; enormous rocks torn up and sent down the stream for leagues, and every cascade marked by ruin and despair: but the inexhaustible waters flow on, and are never interrupted in their work of utility, carrying through aqueducts of Roman construction their treasures to the great town at the distance of leagues from their source.

There is a spring of hot mineral waters close by, at St. Mart, of great power, formerly thought miraculous, and containing a large quantity of carbonic acid gas; the situation of this spring is, however, very inconvenient, the road from Clermont to Royat being impassable, except on horseback, and too rough at any time for invalids. It would not be by any means impossible to make a tolerably good path, but such a thought has apparently never entered

the mind of any person in the neighbourhood, however beneficial to the locality such a work would be.

Clermont is, on its frequent market-days, filled with peasants from the adjacent *communes* and bourgs, bringing merchandise; its squares and streets are crowded with bullocks and waggons, and their drivers *en blouse;* and to pass along is a service of danger. From day break begins the *charivari*, and the day has almost closed before the traffic is finished. The *merchants* then parade the town, enter the cabarets and enjoy themselves, singing at the top of their loud voices Auvergnat ditties not remarkable for. melody. They are a strange wild race, fond of money, avaricious, yet well off, extremely uneducated and coarse in their manners, easily excited, and somewhat brutal in their habits. Much that distinguished the inhabitants of the different villages and towns round Clermont has of late years disappeared, but in Mont-Ferrand still exist three classes which deserve to be described, as preserving their original customs at the present day. These three races keep always separate, and have great contempt for each other: they are the *vachers*, the *vignerons*, and the *villadiers*.

The *vachers* are generally rich and well off;

they cultivate exclusively all the great farms or domains of Limagne, carefully abstaining from attending themselves to the vines, for which service they employ the *vignerons*. They possess the land they cultivate, and generally live on the farms, although most families have a house in town, where they seldom sleep, only visiting it on occasion of fêtes, fairs, markets, or on Sundays: they are entitled *maîtres* and *maîtresses*. The *vignerons* are not so rich, but are said to be less ignorant and more generous; they are arrogant and self-conceited, and hold themselves superior to the former class. The *villadiers* are poor, and generally worthless, idle, and dissipated; spending their earnings in the cabaret, and leaving their wives and children to public charity. They usually come down from the mountains, from whence wretchedness has driven them, and seek daily work from the *vignerons* and *vachers*, who employ them in the most laborious duties. At other times, they act as servants at the farms, and are called *gouris*.

The *patois* of Auvergne is a remarkable feature; it preserves much of the ancient troubadour language, and when spoken by children or very young women, is musical and pretty; but it is generally used by the mountaineers, whose

habit of calling to each other from a distance in the open air strangely spoils any beauty of voice they may possess. All the townspeople in Auvergne speak the *patois*, and the facility with which they change their dialect to French when addressing a stranger is curious enough. In the mountains, however, many of the peasants cannot understand French at all.

Some of the airs of the *bourrées* and *montagnardes* are pretty, but the drawling and shrill tone of the *cornemeuse*, the Auvergnat bagpipe, does not embellish them much; neither is there any grace in the movements of their national dance, and the voices of the common people, both in speaking and singing, are remarkably unpleasing.

Auvergne has produced many great men. Clermont still proudly preserves the memory of Pascal and of Massillon. The latter, though not born in Auvergne, was long bishop of Clermont, and died there. The Chancellor, Michael de l'Hôpital was born at Aigueperse, and General Désaix in the same neighbourhood.

The ancient residence of the Bishops of Clermont, was Mozun, near Billom; which was a castle, or rather a fortress of great strength; but being situated in the midst of the mountains, it was only habitable part of the year. Beauregard

was afterwards chosen for the bishop's palace, as being in a more healthy position, and amongst more pleasing scenery. Here the great Massillon generally lived, and from thence dispensed those benefits which long made his name dear to the inhabitants of this part of the country. He died here in 1742, his heart was buried in the village church, and his body in the cathedral of Clermont. He was followed to the tomb by all the people of Beauregard, who wept with unfeigned sorrow for their benefactor. For very long after the simple peasants believed that he was in the habit of returning to them, and many persuaded themselves that he had been seen in his library reading, according to his wont. Whenever he appeared in the streets of Clermont, every one prostrated themselves, and he was always greeted with the cry of *Vive notre père!*

A bishop of a very different character was Guillaume Duprat, whose memorable defence of his beard is always recounted in the reminiscences of Clermont. It appears that this churchman wore his beard long, according to the fashion of the courtiers of Francis I. When he first visited his cathedral church, with this cherished appendage, he found the gates of the choir shut against him. Three dignitaries of the chapter, placed at the entrance, presented him,

the first with a razor, the second scissors, and the third a volume containing the ancient statutes of the church, open at the place which treated *de barbis rasis.* The bishop resisted manfully, he insisted on keeping his beard, the churchmen protested against it; at length he retired from the contest, exclaiming, "I save my beard and quit my bishopric." He instantly set out for Beauregard, where he continued henceforth to reside. Every time that he assisted at the assemblies of the church, he was obliged to ask permission of the chapter to appear without having shaved. Continually had he to humble himself thus, and great discussions always took place before his request was granted; but he managed always to gain his point.

It is a fact, that at this period, several chapters of cathedrals declared war against the beards of their bishops. At Troyes, at Orleans, at Le Mans, at Chartres, and at Amiens, these pious clergymen had to battle for their beards, from whence probably arose the proverb—*Défends ta barbe.*

One of our first walks from Clermont was to Royat, and thence, disgusted with the dirt and clamour of the village, we escaped to a quiet road, which led to a beautiful position on the mountain called Montaudon, where we rested at

the base of a curiously carved cross in a lonely spot beneath fine trees, from whence a chain of high volcanic hills seemed almost within our reach. The remarkable Montrognon was the most conspicuous; it is in the usual form of a cone, and the single, apparently slender, ruined tower at the extreme point of its height, looks like the chimney of the burning crater; when clouds hover about it the illusion is perfect, and has a most mysterious effect. We were obliged to abandon our wish of mounting a Dôme which rose at our feet, the lowest of the near range, as we found the paths too steep and intricate.

The next day, however, we resolved to set out earlier and dare more, and contrived to reach the summit of two of the myriad Dômes which invite adventurers on all sides. We followed a narrow path, which led us higher and higher and became steeper and steeper, till we found ourselves fairly in the midst of shrubs, to which we were obliged to cling, to assist our ascent. We had gained the summit of the Puy de Châteix, the view from whence is glorious, and repays the trouble; but it is literally necessary to go on hands and knees to attain it. We sat down in a cornfield, and saw round us high hills cultivated to the very summit, while beyond rose others, still more elevated, which presented barren and black-

ened peaks, some covered with the ruins of ancient feudal castles, some with rocks assuming similar forms.

Not content with the high place which we had already reached, we continued our rambles towards a mass of basaltic rock confusedly piled above us, on a neighbouring mountain from which a gorge, not very difficult to cross, separated us. We went on, and at last found ourselves looking down upon the valley of Royat, from the Puy de Châteix, the elevation of which is six hundred *mètres*, French calculation, above the level of the sea.

Here, where mineralogists come to search for treasure, once stood the castle of a famous chief, Waifre, Duke of Aquitaine; but except the huge rocks formed, as was probable, his walls, there is now no vestige of his stronghold. The wild prospect from this pinnacle is most imposing; the chain of high mountains, of which we had climbed one to reach this, appeared dwarfish below us, another range lower still afar off; Clermont and the plain of La Limagne, deep in the lowest distance, the wooded valley of Les Sources at our feet, and a frame of frowning rocks reaching the sky, and shutting in the greatest part of the landscape, Gravenoir with the deep red stains on its surface frowning above all.

When we descended this height to return, we resolved to find another route back to Clermont, as the descent of our first mountain seemed to me too fearfully precipitous; in an evil hour we altered our route and entered the vines on the other side.

Once fairly embarked amongst the intricate paths which lead in all directions through the vineyards, the stranger must give up all hope of going right from any sagacity of his own; terrace after terrace did we follow, now high now low, now seemingly straight, then suddenly doubling and bringing us back to the spot we started from, like a labyrinth laid out on purpose to deceive! Several times we came upon vinedressers, male and female, who directed us with loud cries in their *patois*, pointing to the downward path which we were to take; more than one of these were afflicted with the universal *goître*, which disfigures the peasantry of France, and one was an idiot, who seemed unable to comprehend our distress.

Still we struggled on and imagined we had taken the path which would lead us down to the valley and the high road, when, to our consternation, we found ourselves on the edge of a precipice, with the torrent between us and our route. We then resolved to turn back, and, en-

deavouring to retrace our steps, mount the hill again and return by the steep way we had come, which we thought it possible to find. Far from being able to accomplish this, we kept getting deeper and deeper into the maze of garlands which the vines threw round us, and were beginning to despair of extricating ourselves, when we espied an open gate into a vine garden which was evidently on a descent; we thought it might lead to a house where we could find some person to guide us, and eagerly entered.

In a few minutes we heard voices, and were in the presence of a merry party, seated beneath an arbour, listening to the accounts of a traveller, who, like ourselves, had been exploring. He however was accompanied by an accredited guide, who exhibited to us his badge of office, and severely reproached us for our daring. Two very pretty young girls, to whom the garden belonged, and who exhibited the wonders of the Grenièrs-de César to all comers, now insisted on our reposing a little after our fatigues, before they conducted us into the right path. They had seen us an hour before perched on the height of the Puy de Châteix, and had half anticipated our dilemma, one, they told us, which was not unusual. "We left our gate open on purpose," said they, "thinking you might find

your way here by chance." We were very grateful for their hospitality, and glad of the opportunity of buying some of the burnt corn which is found in blackened heaps in the caverns of the rock on this spot.

We thought these benevolent damsels must have belonged to *las fades de Montjuzet*, who are said to be so much superior in amiability to their neighbours.

Montjuzet is a calcareous rock close by, which produces wine of great renown. On its summit is said to have existed a temple of Jupiter, whence its corrupted name which was originally Mons Jovis. Its priestesses were always surrounded by a company of young maidens to whom they taught the hidden mysteries of their rites; they were called *fatuæ, fades, folles, or fées*, and their pupils *bonnes filles*. The reputation of these ladies seems still preserved in the country, and it is not unusual to hear the common people say, in asking about those who come from Montjuzet and the parts adjacent, *Tu sé du quarté de la bonnas fillas?*

CHAPTER VI.

Journey to the Great Puy.—The Puy de Dôme.—The Guide.—The Ascent.—Wild Mountaineer.—Petit Puy.—Nid de la Poule.—The Summit Reached.—Witches Sabbath.—La Berba.—The Four Priests.—Burning Mountains.—Costume.

THE perils, however, we had encountered, did not damp our desire to make a longer and more enterprising ascent, and we accordingly engaged a carriage to take us to the Puy de Dôme itself, which we proposed mounting.

From Clermont to La Baraque, the village from whence the guides are procured, the drive is about two hours by a very fine broad road, extremely steep in parts, but by no means difficult. The views are splendid during the whole journey, and become bolder and grander as the great Puy is approached, which stands upwards of 1400 mètres above the level of the sea, and more than 1100 above the plain of La Limagne.

The proverb of the country which says, relative to le Petit Puy,

Si Dôme étoit sur Dôme,
On verrait les portes de Rome,—

may give an idea of its estimated height in France.

At La Baraque we stopped at the cottage, where we hoped to find the guide recommended to us: his wife informed us that he had ascended the mountain with some travellers a few hours before, but that she was ready to accompany us. As she spoke in Auvergnat, we were uneasy, thinking she would be unable to answer any of our questions if we took her; but she soon quieted our fears by assuring us she could speak French as well as us, or any other Paris ladies,—all strangers being considered Parisians.

She accordingly got into the carriage, which conveyed us in about half an hour to the part of the plain where the lava begins its irregular formations. Further than this we could not go, and it was only then we found that the ascent could only be made on foot, as it was not considered safe for animals of any sort. The way seemed long and the attempt perilous, but we would not give it up; therefore, abandoning ourselves to the guidance of the old woman who was to show us the way, we began our march. The day was bright, and warm in the plains below; but we had felt the wind in-

creasing as we mounted, till it now became sensibly violent. There are few days in the year when the blasts from the Puy de Dôme are not severe, but we were not prepared for the hurricane we had to brave. Long before we had reached the first ascent we were nearly exhausted with our struggles, but, after resting at every convenient opportunity, we recovered our strength, and went on. Nothing could be worse than the path strewn with masses of rock, and ploughed by the torrents which come rushing down from the summit: now we were ankle-deep in sand, now wading through slippery mud; now sliding over short turf, now struggling through tangled bushes; in short, buffeted as we were by the wind, which swept in eddies round us, we had the utmost difficulty to keep our feet.

We had not reached a quarter of the way when we met a party of ladies, who had found the ascent too difficult, and were returning; the gentlemen of their party had continued their journey to the top with the guide. They earnestly recommended us to abandon the attempt; but we were obstinate, and, though our companion seemed half inclined to dissuade us too, we resumed our endeavours.

We were now a little sheltered by a projec-

tion of the huge mountain, and sat down for some time to share our welcome refreshments with our guide, who appeared more exhausted than ourselves, though accustomed to the ascent. She must have been handsome when young; and the innocent and agreeable expression of her countenance, and a voice less harsh than those we had of late been accustomed to hear, pleased us extremely. The mixture of *patois* with her French was very amusing; and her delight on hearing we were English was great, as she flattered herself that there existed much similarity in the languages we respectively used. She seemed to look upon the French as a separate nation, to which the mountaineers did not belong; and boasted of the superiority of the latter in many particulars, especially in their being free from the *goître* which deforms their neighbours of the valleys.

While we were conversing, a loud shout was heard above us, and she started up, imagining that her husband was coming down: she hurried before us, smiling and looking quite delighted; but called out in an altered voice that it was not him, only a mountaineer with his cows.

Presently we reached the spot where the pair stood, and a more savage-looking apparition I never beheld than the herdsman before

me. He was sunburnt, with black bright eyes, and a quantity of long wild black hair flying about his face from under his large broad-edged beaver hat; his shaggy cloak was hanging in drapery round him; he held a long staff, and was throwing his arms about with vehement gestures. When I approached, he rushed towards me, and, casting himself down on the grass nearly at my feet, began talking in a very high key, and using forcible gesticulations. I felt quite startled, as I feared he was offended at something; and appealed to the old woman, who in a reproving voice told him in *patois* not to make so much noise — "*son Anglaises.*" At this word our wild man uttered a shout and clapped his hands; he could speak a few words of French, from which I gathered that he was desirous of affording us assistance, and would with the greatest pleasure carry us in his arms up the remainder of the mountain.

I felt afraid of being seized upon and borne away in spite of myself by my Orson-like champion, and with grateful acknowledgments declined his offer. He seemed surprised, but, after a little more conversation with our guide, saluted us, and scrambled up a steep path, where we soon lost sight of him. "There is no harm in him," said our old lady, who never-

theless looked a little scared; "*but these people have no education.*"

We soon after met her husband with his party of three gentlemen, one of whom had a handkerchief tied round his head, as the wind had carried off his hat on the summit of the Puy. They were amazed at our intending to go further; but though we required a hand at this moment to help us over a difficult pass, in the usual style of *modern* French gallantry they seemed resolved to take care of themselves only, and hurried away, while the husband called after us many *bon courages*, to encourage our attempt.

Just where we met them a magnificent point of view opened before us. We were on a level with the Petit Puy, and beheld a panorama of the greatest beauty stretched out as far as we could gaze; — rocks on rocks, mountains on mountains, plains, valleys, and forests at our feet, peaks whose craters seemed still yawning, with all their chasms, unseen in the distance, clearly visible, and opening their huge jaws like some antediluvian monsters. The Nid de la Poule is the most conspicuous, and presents a large hollow crater of most singular appearance.

We had now arrived at the part from whence

the ascent is the most difficult: to the crest of the mountain it appeared almost perpendicular, and all the way was strewn with the white ashes of its ancient eruption. We had now a very difficult task, and were obliged to exert all our energies to reach the summit, which after great exertion we at length accomplished. The wind roared round us, and was icy cold; and we hurried to throw ourselves down in a hollow of the irregular *plateau* which crowns the Puy, at the foot of an erection placed there for observations.

In a few minutes we were able to look about us, and magnificent was the prospect which burst upon our sight. All the wide extent of La Marche and Le Limousin was beneath us as in a map: the first elevations of the chain of the Monts Dômes running far into the distance, and those of the Monts Dores; the expanse of Lake Aydat; and the vast basin of La Limagne, through which runs the silver line of the Allier, which the eye may follow into the Bourbonnais. All this, and much more which we were *assured we could see*, we were not permitted long to gaze on; for almost in an instant clouds gathered over the mountain, spreading in all directions as if attracted towards it; the blast howled furiously, and a

dense vapour closed us in, shutting the landscape from us entirely. There was no hope of its clearing again, but some chance of a storm, which we had little inclination to witness; therefore, hastily gathering up some pieces of calcined rock and a few leaves as *souvenirs* of the wondrous volcano, we began our descent.

There is not a tree to be seen on the whole mountain; the surface is covered with coarse grass, with occasionally a patch of short downy turf and low shrubs, amongst which the principal is one that bears a small purple berry which the mountaineers gather in large quantities and bring to market. Nothing can be more dreary and desolate than the aspect of this bleak spot, which we had mounted on a Wednesday, one of the mystic days on the evening of which a grand Sabbath is held every week *of all the witches in France!* No doubt the arrival of some of the community was the cause of the sudden darkness which overspread the summit so soon after we reached it.

The descent was even more fatiguing than we found it mounting, and we were obliged to rest as many times.

I asked our guide if there were wolves here, or if there was any tradition of a *loup-garou.* She answered gravely, that neither were to be

found on the Puy de Dôme; and, as for fairies, they were never seen here,—"Because," said she, "they are fond of woods, and we have no trees; in Le Forez, over yonder, there are plenty, for there they find the shade they love. But," she added, confounding the genders in the Auvergnat fashion, "we have, nearly at the bottom of the mountain, *le plus joli petit bête du monde, si doux, si bon, qui jamais n'a fait mal à personne.*"

What could this charming little animal be, peculiar to this region? was it an izard,—a deer,—an ermine? what could it be? She told me it was called *Berba;* and that, amiable as it was, it was unkindly treated by man, who selfishly took its warm skin from it and killed it into the bargain.

When we had reached a spot a little lower down, she pointed out to us a flock of these mysterious animals, which turned out to be no other than *sheep.* As she had never been anywhere but on the Puy de Dôme, she imagined such creatures unknown in every other part of the globe.

We had been joined by a traveller, who, in spite of her assurances that he would find no path in any other direction, persisted in attempting to descend on the opposite side from that we took. She warned him that he might share

the fate of a party who would not be persuaded, and had met with an adventure, comic enough, but not very agreeable.

Four priests had mounted to the top of the Puy, and, after enjoying a repast in the hollow crater, resolved to try a descent in the direction which pleased them most. They attempted it, but had not got far, when the evil spirits, evidently jealous of their daring, came forth in the form of a furious wind. All four were thrown down, their feet slipped, for the ground was perpendicular and as smooth as glass: one of them was sent flying down the side, pieces of his habit resting on every bush; his priest's hat was borne away, the sport of the mischievous imps who were gamboling in the air; and after much struggling, screaming, and panting, the discomfited party were fain to crawl on hands and knees back to the summit, and submit to descend by the usual route, which is certainly precipitous enough to satisfy the most adventurous.

It was not long before our fellow-explorer made his appearance, quite out of breath; having found that the report was correct, and that no *chemin de velours* was to be discovered.

On St. John's Eve this solitary mountain presents a curious spectacle; crowds from every

village and town in the district flock hither and climb to the summit, where a great fire is lighted in honour of the saint, which is seen blazing for leagues. It must be a grand sight from the Petit Puy or any of the lower hills, and revive the traditionary aspect of the country when the Puy de Dôme sent forth flames from its centre into the clouds. Then every peak of Auvergne and Velay was on fire, and shot up tongues of lurid light to heaven;—surely, the great Mastodon and Megalosaurus were then grazing in the plains beneath, and giants and ogres were their herdsmen! Nothing too fearful or too wild can be imagined in such a scene, and it is difficult to tame down the fancy, fresh from its wonders, to the quiet and commonplace of every-day sights.

Nothing remains at or about Clermont of the numerous abbeys and castles which once crowded round it. A wall is pointed out as belonging to the ancient *abbaye royale* of St. André, of the order of Prémontré, built by Guillaume sixth Count of Auvergne. Here were formerly the tombs of many of the Dauphins, but not a wreck now is to be found.

Above the village of Chamalières, the church of which is curious and very antique, is a dilapidated ruin, called La Tour des Sarrasins,

which once formed part of the palace of the Dauphins of Auvergne; and, here and there, picturesque bits of ivy-covered walls may be discovered, all tradition of which is worn out in this commerce-loving, bullock-driving place.

The costume of the inhabitants of La Limagne is not in general pleasing: the women in the towns usually wear ugly-shaped straw bonnets, trimmed with bands of black velvet; the men large beaver hats with broad brims. In some of the villages they are prettier and more singular; for instance, the women have caps, some pointed, some flat, with long square ends hanging to their waists; they have a conventual effect, and nearly cover the eyes like a cowl. Their bodices are pretty, being of black velvet edged with red, forming a peak between the shoulders, and ending suddenly under the arms. The sleeves of their gowns are of two colours, and a broad sash of scarlet is bound round their chests; which, with the vivid colours of their aprons and handkerchiefs, produces a good effect.

Our next destination was to Thiers, and its famous valley of cascades; and we left Clermont with the intention of taking it on our route previous to visiting the Monts Dores, when we had finished our wanderings in Le Velay.

CHAPTER VII.

Castles.—Thiers.—Scenery.—The enamoured Guide.—L'Home Conten.—Nôtre Dame des Piques.—Château des Hauts.—Le Petit Malheureux.—Peirres Plats.—The Blacksmith.—Montagnarde.—Mère Colette.

THE drive from Clermont to Thiers is not remarkable for any particular beauty; the country is, however, rich and flourishing. Occasionally a high hill starts up, crowned with picturesque ruins: the castles of Muson, Ravel, Beauregard, each are placed in fine positions, and were, of course, the scenes of many a struggle throughout the frequent wars and contentions which desolated this part of France.

The approach to Thiers is imposing: the town is built on the summit and on the decline of a high mountain, round which the road winds for some time before the town is reached. This road is charming, bordered with vineyards and orchards, groves and deep valleys, with every here and there steep rugged rocks appearing above and below, and giving promise of the

wild scenery for which this part of the country is celebrated.

We were betrayed by our driver, and induced to descend at what he assured us was the best inn; and as its name, *Du Centre*, informed us that it must be near everything, we consented to cross the black kitchen which yawned towards the street to receive us. Having narrowly escaped falling backwards into a stable, the door of which stood open half-way up the grim dark staircase by which we ascended, we reached the large room destined for us, which, though desolate-looking enough, was not dirty. As we were fatigued and hungry, we agreed to remain there; the fine moonlight which streamed into our window deceiving us as treacherously as our coachman, and making objects appear better than they were.

A very civil hostess prepared our table, and produced for our accommodation a case of knives, evidently looked upon as of superior quality: of course they cut no better than any other French knives, though doubtless the produce of the celebrated manufactories of the neighbouring town of St. Etienne, the Birmingham of France, where the iron mines are considered superior. Our fare was good, and our attendants zealous; but the noise of carts, cart-

ers, workmen repairing the house, and clamour of all kinds which assailed us throughout the hours usually devoted to sleep, were more intolerable than could be borne. Other torments, and unusually bad beds, drove us to despair, and early in the morning we sallied forth, hoping to find better accommodation in Thiers, in which we were successful.

Whoever desires to pass ten days at one of the most charming places in this part of France must take up his rest at the new Hôtel de l'Europe, *tenu par Betant*, where the handsome landlady and her civil husband will treat them in the most hospitable manner possible, and make their sojourn delightful.

We mounted *au cinquième*, in order to have as full a view as could be obtained of the beautiful scenery spread out before the high windows commanding the whole town, and a panoramic view of ranges of mountains all round, with the Puy de Dôme conspicuous in the distance.

The situation of Thiers is extremely fine: from the highest part of the town the view extends over the whole of La Limagne, with its towns, villages, and innumerable hills; while afar are seen the majestic mountains which surround Auvergne, and run through it in all parts. At the foot of the pointed rock on which Thiers is

built, the river Durole pours forth her waters along a stony valley pent in between rugged hills. The noisy, foaming stream turns many mills, and forms numerous cascades, natural and artificial, of extreme beauty; after which it rejoins the Dore at a little distance.

There is great variety in the scenery, which is, in some places, all cultivated with rich vineyards and luxuriant trees; and in others presents the most savage aspects in its ranges of rocks, steep, barren, and jagged, inaccessible and dreary, and of fearful height. In this part we were told of a mountain whose quarries yield stone as fine to the eye, and apparently as hard and durable, as that of Volvic; but it belongs to the fairies, who are jealous of its being disturbed: and, after buildings are constructed with it, it falls to pieces by degrees, scaling off in flakes as the moonlight falls on its surface, while the mischievous troops of spirits from whom it has been taken surround it with shouts and laughter.

Certainly the wild rocks and valleys of Thiers are just fit to be the abode of mysterious beings; and often, as we sat about half-way up the mountains, or deep down in the gorges, we thought ourselves surrounded by them, and that we heard their voices in the whistling breeze, which sighed amongst the heaps of Druidical stones scattered in

all directions. Perhaps it was one of these creatures of the elements who appeared a little time ago, and won the heart of our young guide to the cascades, who did nothing but sound the praises of a lovely fair one who had passed some time the previous summer here, and who was constantly to be seen perched on some rock, or leaning over some waterfall, sketching every romantic bit that she came near. Her talent evidently, in his opinion, was more than mortal; she seemed as if by magic to transfer the landscape to her paper, and was, besides, so beautiful, that the very trees bowed down to her in worship as she passed.

He described her dress as wonderfully gorgeous. She wore a golden chain, which went several times round her neck and hung down below her waist; she had golden ear-rings, brooches and rings without number, and glittered like a shooting-star in the dark sky of the valley of the Durole. I asked our enthusiastic informant if she was always so dressed on her expeditions amongst these solitary mountains. "Oh yes," he answered; "but she walked in our promenades too, and I promise you there were plenty of gentlemen to look at her. *Oh qu'elle étoit bien faite — toute mignonne — de dix-neuf ans — vraiment parfaite!*" At every pause in our walk

along the banks of the brawling river, through the terrace-gardens of vines, by the rocky recesses where the stream glitters in foamy falls, the enamoured swain renewed his descriptions—here she sat—here she drew—here she wandered.

This fair stranger, with her ornaments "rich and rare," has evidently left an impression in the valley not soon to be effaced, and often does the *filleta muda** of the rocks of Thiers repeat her praises, though her name be unknown.

A fitting place is this for solitary musing, such as perhaps inspired one of the poets of Auvergne when he wrote *L'IIome Conten.*

There is a singular resemblance in the beginning of this poem to Pope's version of, "Happy the man," &c. Even the measure is similar in the *patois.* A free translation of some of the stanzas may convey some idea of this popular poem, which was composed by a priest of Montferrand, M. Pasturel, and gives a pleasing picture of country life:—

Happy, who far from care or strife
Is well content his plough to guide;
What Nature asks to sweeten life
Who has, nor sighs for aught beside;

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* *Fickle Maiden.* The echo is so called in Auvergnat *patois.*

Who hears the lark the morn proclaim,
The crowing cock and children's din,
Who sees his hearth with merry flame
Prepare the food his labours win.
Who fears not bailiff, clerk, nor judge,
Who has no foe nor tyrant lord,
Who owes no neighbour round a grudge,
Nor envies at another's hoard.
Whose barns are full, whose cellar's rows
Show casks of wine in rich array,
Whose servants are but few, and those
Who love to rise at early day.
The cloth his wife has spun who wears,
Who never fails the mass divine,
And finds the soup his dame prepares,
And dips his crust in rosy wine.
Who sees his household well and kind,
Has gain'd by toil his daughter's dower,
Sits at his porch with grateful mind,
And marks his oxen's strength and power.
Then he may roam to some retreat,
Sheltered from sun or wind too rude,
Far from all noise or dust or heat,
And please him in his solitude.
How soft to hear along the mead
The wave, among the rocks distress'd,
Chiding the pebbles that impede
Her course, and wrinkle o'er her breast.
He chants some lay, and she replies,
The fickle maiden * of the cave,
Who, though the first she still denies,
The last of ev'ry word will have.

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* Fillèta muda.

He sees the wrangling birds, whose song
Chides the soft winds that dare to kiss
The flowers they love, and warble long,
Till, full of tenderness and bliss,
The blossoms spread a couch of bloom,
And welcome them with rich perfume.

There is much more to the same purpose; sometimes the stanzas are very poetical, and sometimes they give merely a catalogue of comforts, such as the counting of chickens in the court-yard, and the pleasure of listening to the cackling and *gobbling* of geese and turkies, the housing of cattle, and putting to bed of children, when this happy farmer may boast of being more secure than the *Grand Turk* himself.

A few verses of the original will show the style, and the beauty of some of the words and images.

L'HOME CONTEN.

Heiroux, que sens soucy, sens proucez, sens querella
Ei conten de tenir la quoua de sa padella;
Et, que bien parvegu de ce que faut chez se,
Ne crent ni fam, ni se.

Qu'attend, par se leva, la jangouiliante * aubada,
Que foué tous laus matis, sa petita moueinada.
Qu' ausi chanta son jhau,† et vé de son chabe
Son doueire, que but bé.‡

* * * * *

* Pleasant lark. † Cock. ‡ Pot that boils well.

En un liô eilevat soubre une jhente mouta,
Loen de bruit, eicarta de passage et de routa
A l'abri dau bizouar,* enfin dens un climat
Ni trop sec, ni trop mât.†

Qu' au plasei d'eicouta marmouta, dins la prada
Entre de petits rocs, la cliarta naïada ;
Se plenghe daus cailloux, que l'y fason l'affront
De ly rema le front.

Qu' au ne charmariô pas una tau solituda
Oute re ne reipond, mas la *filleta muda* ‡
Que rechigna laus mots, et quand serion d'un rei
Vô aveir le derrei.

Ente laus auselous disputon embei l'aura §
Que foué milla fredons par lazina || sa flora ;
Qu' en revencha d'aquou, touta plena d'amour
L'y foué un leit de flours.

The paper-mills along this romantic stream employ several thousand work-people, as well women as men, and the mill owners are very rich. A man gains twelve francs a week, working twelve hours a day; they seem content enough with this employ in summer, but in winter they suffer dreadfully from cold, and when the frost is hard, the paths are very perilous.

The town, which is hideous, appears pretty from the opposite side of the valley; its irregular buildings, forming terraces one above another half hidden by grape vines, have a charming

* Bizouar, blast. † Damp. ‡ Echo. § Zephyr.
|| Lazina, caress.

effect, and have gained for the spot the title of the French Tivoli, a compliment which, agreeable as it is, it scarcely deserves. The battered and ruinous old church of St. Jean, buried amongst the dirty streets of the interior, comes out, as it must have looked when first built high and grand, overtopping all; never was a view "by distance made more sweet," for that which is odious near, is picturesque in the extreme afar off.

Some of the towers of the old castle, once of great strength and importance, and parts of the walls of defence still exist, and show well in the wild scenery round them. At a ruined gateway, near an antique bridge over the murmuring torrent, is a *tour* inclosing a small oratory where, closed in with bars, through which she can be seen by all, is enthroned Nôtre Dame des Piques, covered with tinsel and finery, and so glittering that one might almost imagine it was she herself whose *bravery* gleamed in the eyes of our love-stricken guide.

The head-dress of the women at Thiers is very peculiar and pretty; they wear a double white cap with four long wings, two meeting and depending behind and one on each shoulder. The caul is pointed like a capuchin and rather high; as the women are prettier here than at Clermont,

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and their complexions not so bad, their appearance in this strange-shaped costume is pleasing enough, but even here we were shocked to observe the *goître* prevails, though to a less frightful degree.

Amongst the many fine walks we took at Thiers, one to the Château des Hauts was peculiarly agreeable. There is but little remaining of the ancient castle; which, now a modern house, belongs to a family described to us as another band of brothers like the stalwart sons of Hardicanute, all handsome and fine-looking, "six proper youths and tall." The last of them lives with a *ci-devant* Fairly Fair, his sister; both are nearly eighty, and both were confined with gout, which prevented their extending towards us, in person, the hospitality for which they are celebrated in the country. Their castle stands on a high hill, in a most beautiful position, with all the mountains of Auvergne around it, and, before it was ruined by the Revolution, must have been a very handsome domain.

We were permitted to remain in the gardens, full of flowers, and sit beneath the fine trees as long as we pleased, while two or three servants, all apparently partaking of their masters' liberality and suavity, stood by relating anecdotes of the family, and lamenting that we

were not received as guests in consequence of the illness of Monsieur, who would be quite in despair when he found we had been without his having an opportunity of doing the honours of his château.

We were seated on a bench in a fine walk, before which was a large green, where clothes were drying; a magnificent prospect of mountain and vale was spread beneath the adjoining meadows and corn-fields; and we were told all, as far as we could see, once belonged to the Seigneur des Hauts, but had passed away to other hands at the Revolution, which had left but a small domain and fortune to the most generous and amiable of men.

Looking up, I saw close beside us, and gazing in our faces with a radiant expression of delight, a little ragged half-clad boy, with a pair of the blackest and funniest eyes I ever beheld, cheeks like peonies, and face like a full moon; his curly dark hair flying in the breeze, and his chubby hands full of leaves and flowers: he was leaning on the back, or rather embracing the neck of an enormous handsome dog, who seemed to share his curiosity, and looked as carelessly happy as himself. We gave him some *sous*, which seemed to delight him past expression: he exhibited his treasure with glee,

and was immediately pounced upon by the old housekeeper and her assistant, and dragged towards us in order that he might express his gratitude in fitting terms. Struggling and laughing he complied, and then, with his friend the dog, began bounding and rolling about the lawn.

I asked who he was.—"*Ah! c'est un petit malheureux!*" was the reply; "his mother is very unlucky, she has a large family, and is wretchedly poor—*c'est un vrai malheureux!*—your charity is well bestowed on him." I hazarded the remark that he looked the very picture of health and happiness.—"*C'est vrai,*" replied my informant; "Monsieur supports them all, for one would not separate the child from the mother, and we take care he has plenty to eat; he is full of fun, and may come and go as he likes; he is very good, and we are all fond of the *petit chiffon.*"

Bounding and dancing before us, *le petit malheureux* went, as he was desired, to show us the prettiest walks, and we parted with him, wishing that all the *miserable* children we constantly saw lived in the neighbourhood of as kind a man as M. de Riberol de Lestrat.

The walk to the château is precipitous, but very rural and pleasant. We parted with our guide on our return, as we wished to enjoy the

fine summer day at our leisure, amongst the piled-up rocks and grassy knolls which invited us to wander from the direct path. I sat down to sketch a most extraordinary altar of rocks on a height which had a very Druidical form, and seemed well calculated to be the hiding-place of dwarfs and fairies. Below us, at a great depth, hurried along the foaming river, whose hoarse murmurs we heard as it dashed over the masses which impeded its sinuous course along the wooded valley. An immense rugged rock, called La Marjeride, raised its irregular surface and jagged edges on the opposite side of the gorge, down which we gazed. Corn was waving in fields so precipitous that it seemed a marvel how the ground could ever be ploughed; a thousand wild flowers of every colour were shaking their bells and blossoms in the soft wind; the bright sun chequered the green sward with its light, gleaming through the leaves of beech and acacia; butterflies were flitting here and there; and everything was glowing, peaceful, and warm as summer weather could be, when suddenly a low roar was heard, a few large drops came plashing amongst the branches, and the whole face of things was changed. Torrents of rain came pouring down, and we were forced to fly for shelter into the shallow fairy caverns of the

Pierres Plats, as the pile I was drawing is called; but the storm came on thicker and faster, with occasional intervals of calm, during one of which we escaped, and began the slippery descent which was to conduct us back to Thiers. We had, not, however, proceeded far when, the violence of the rain increasing, we were fain to follow the example of a pretty young woman in a large straw hat tied with a blue riband, who hurried into a hut by the wayside.

There we found she was at home, but, unlike an *English* peasant, appeared entirely unoccupied, except in standing listlessly watching the storm as it beat against the casement and in at the open door. At one end of the cottage sat a sullen-looking man, lazily twisting broom, of which a large pile filled one side of the chamber; a forge, and all the implements of a considerable trade, were before him, but he was not at work, nor preparing for it. From time to time he looked up at us, and at last addressed some remark in broad *patois* to his wife, whose manners seemed much superior to his own, and who spoke very good French. We apologised for having intruded, and thanked him for the shelter his shed afforded us. He seemed to care little whether we stayed or went, but presently motioned that a wooden bench should be pushed

towards us. Encouraged by this approach towards civility, I ventured to enter into conversation with him, assisted by his wife as interpreter. He asked me, as usual, a great many questions, and seemed curious to know some particulars of England; amongst other things, he begged to know if every man was *a baron* with us, and whether we were not all rich. "Think of your all being able," said he, spitefully, "to travel about and enjoy yourselves, while we are all starving here. I suppose you have no poor in your country? We are all poor here." I spoke of the general industry of our peasants, and could not help glancing at the mud floor, as irregular as in a ploughed field, of his domicile, and thinking how difficult it was to be otherwise than poor with habits such as his and his wife's, who both were evidently fonder of the *dolce far niente* than of working hard. As usual, the little intelligence he had, enabled him to talk politics and abuse the government, which he seemed as capable as his neighbours of remodelling to advantage.

Our gallant guide by this time returned with umbrellas from the town, having come on a voyage of discovery for us up the mountain, as he found the rain had fairly set in for the day, and he divined our distress. We were not sorry

to take leave of our sullen host, whose looks and language were by no means agreeable, in spite of the attempts of his pretty wife to turn his phrases into something like civility.

The next day the weather was charming, and no traces of the rain left; we enjoyed therefore our rambles about the valley of cascades extremely, and a long stroll along a beautiful mountain road, flanked with magnificent rocks of fantastic shapes and rich colours of red and grey.

The high terrace of the town, which is the principal promenade, is also a delightful retreat, commanding a most extensive and beautiful view of the Puy de Dôme and its satellites on the one hand, and the rugged wall of the Marjeride and its wooded valleys on the other.

From our high window at the inn we were amused many an evening watching the gambols of a party of children who danced the *Montagnarde*, accompanying their steps with clapping of hands and singing. One of their games was somewhat singular: one girl was placed in the middle of a circle, and others advanced towards her, she seemed protected by one in particular: presently they formed into a band, and hurried round as if on horseback; then a sudden rush was made, and the girl in the centre was

seized and carried off in triumph, amidst laughter and striking of hands. All this was done to a monotonous tune, not unpleasing with their soft voices; and the words, as far as I could distinguish them, might be rendered as follows. It appeared to me a remnant of some ballad, which recorded an outrage committed by some of the desperate *compagnons* who for so many ages infested Auvergne.

MONTAGNARDE.

" I would marry my daughter dear;
But she shall keep from the Band away,
Who scour the country far and near,
And pounce from their rock like birds of prey.
Mère Colette is too wise I trow
To give her daughter to such as thou."

The pretty maid at the lattice stood,
The moon was dancing along the stream;
" I see a band from the distant wood—
O mother, look how their lances gleam!"
Mère Colette is full of glee,
Her daughter the young lord's bride shall be.

" Those are the King's bold knights who ride,
And they are come the Band to seize,"—
The pretty maiden smiled aside:
" The King has no such knights as these."
Mère Colette to her bed is gone,—
The young maid sits at her window lone.

Midnight sounds from St. Jean's deep bell,
Arms are clashing and swords are bright,
Mère Colette has rested well
Not to hear the sounds that night:
Mère Colette has but sorry cheer—
The *Routiers* have stolen her daughter dear!

CHAPTER VIII.

The Guittard-Pinon.—Le Maitre-Pinon.—Departure for Velay.—Courpière.—Laveuse de Nuit.—Oliergues.—Protestants.—Ambert.—Père Gauchon.—Mountain Road.—La Chaise Dieu.—Velay.

We heard a great deal while we were at Thiers of a family whose habits and manners were quite patriarchal.

They all inhabit a village near, and admit none into their community but those who belong to them by blood and marriage.

Their name is Guittard-Pinon, and their little republic is said to be very ancient, dating back for twelve hundred years. They are rich and industrious, and live in great comfort. Voltaire mentions them in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, in the article on domestic economy; but he calls them les *Pignoux* of Auvergne, which is a name belonging to a family of Haute Auvergne, near Murat. The Abbé Rozier, in his *Dictionnaire d'Agriculture*, describes them with eulogium.

The head of the family, or community, is called Maître Pinon, and is regularly elected. Great confidence is reposed in him; but if he abuses his powers or his administration is considered bad, he is deposed and a new ruler chosen by an assembly convoked for the occasion. A mistress is also named, who must belong to a different family of Pinon from the master; she commands the women as he governs the men.

Their rule is that marriages shall always be contracted amongst themselves; but a Guittard was, on some occasion, introduced whose name remains incorporated with theirs. Generally the husbands and wives are cousins german; the bishops of Clermont always granting the necessary dispensations. Whoever married out of the society received five hundred francs dower; the children of these unions might claim their portions from the rest, and sometimes did so, but rarely, in consequence of the profound respect instilled in early age for the house and its customs; thus the general fund ordinarily remained undivided.

The Guittard Pinon have now dwindled to a very small society, but are not quite extinct, though it is probable that, with the present generation, their habits will altogether cease, as they have, for some years, left off many of

their usages and married into the world beyond.

Formerly they all ate at the same table, in a large kitchen, where le Grand d'Aussy, who describes them, says they were served by their wives. One of their rules was never to refuse alms to any who demanded charity; and a building was appropriated by them for the poor who passed through their village, where they were sure to find a supper, a bed, and a breakfast the next morning. They always said prayers together, all their servants being present.

All luxury was banished from their domiciles; great respect inculcated for the master, and simplicity of manners required. They all, even the master, wore the costume of the neighbouring peasants, and their houses were very large but plainly furnished.

One of the Guittard-Pinons had quitted the community to become a canon at Thiers, and had built a house more elegant than the rest, in order to go to the village every week to visit his family more commodiously. At his death *the master*, who was his nephew, had a double right to occupy it, but he considered it an infringement of their customs to do so, and the house was accordingly set apart to receive

any distinguished guests who might come to see them.

They were frequently visited by ministers and *intendants*. Towards the close of the reign of Louis XIV. M. Leblanc, afterwards minister of war and marine, went to their village. He placed the master by his side at table, and made very minute inquiries as to their usages and customs. M. Leblanc, on returning to court, gave a report of them to the king.

M. Pinon being obliged, in consequence of a law-suit, to go to Paris, was presented by the minister to Louis XIV., who took great interest in the information given him. He commanded that the taxes on the community should never exceed a certain moderate sum, and gave the master a handsome present to defray the expenses of his journey.

This same *Maître Pinon* showed as much dexterity in business as wisdom in his administration. The governors of the hospital of Thiers were desirous that he should become one of the assistants in their government; in vain he represented his distance from the town as an obstacle, and stated that the care of his family occupied all his time; they would not give up their point.

He accordingly consented to undertake the

charge they were so anxious to force upon him, but on condition that those engaged in the administration of the affairs of the hospital, and all who might succeed them, should give annually, as he intended to do himself, a certain quantity of corn, wine, and money to the charity. This proviso decided the question and set him free, none of the governors feeling inclined to follow the example he proposed.

The last intendant, M. de Chazerat, was present at a *fête* offered him by the Guittard-Pinons, to whom he gave one in return at his Château of Ligones. He even proposed to the government, and gained his request, that the head of the community should wear a belt of blue velvet, embroidered with the arms of France, and adorned with agricultural emblems. Le Grand d'Aussy was charged to take this belt to its destination, and relates the manner of his reception on the occasion.

He inquired of the chief if quarrels ever occurred amongst his people, and was told that occasionally some little disputes, *un peu de babille*, arose, but that they never went to rest without all being set right. At table, in the evening, said the master, "on trinque, et tout est raccommodé avant la prière."

This manner of living in community was not

uncommon in the environs of Thiers. Time has greatly altered these habits, and there remains now only one family of the Pinons, the head of whom is nearly eighty. M. de Barante whose estate is in this neighbourhood, has given attention to the subject, and afforded some curious information respecting this patriarchal institution.

We had some difficulty in procuring a carriage to suit us at Thiers, to cross the range of mountains which intervene between that place and le Puy en Velay, to which we were bound. Our host, however, possessed a vehicle, which, though by no means adapted to the undertaking, he gazed at, praised, and considered in all ways, till he came to the decision that no carriage, though built on purpose, could possibly be so convenient as this of his. We were so entertained by his confident zeal, and obliged by his anxiety that we should be well taken care of, that we allowed ourselves to be persuaded by his eloquence, and after two hours' consultation and arrangement between him and his groom, he finally managed to settle the position of the baggage in a manner the most unique: we were placed in a sort of hollow shell, the seats of which had springs, though the carriage was without; he was content to perch himself on a very uncomfortable place, not quite on the shafts, and urging forward his very fine strong

horse, our triumphal car drove out of the inn-yard, amidst congratulations, and loudly expressed admiration of his dexterity from all the *bonnes* in the establishment. It might have been possible to look more elegant, but we were very well off in this strange machine, and, the day being beautiful and the scenery exquisite, we enjoyed our drive of fifteen leagues to Ambert extremely. The road for several leagues was pleasant, but not remarkable; at Courpière, where our horse was to be baited, it was cattle fair, and all the little village was in commotion: many a new beaver hat with large brims had been bought that day at the shops at Courpière, which we had evidence of, as we approached, by meeting men who wore two on their heads for the greater convenience of carrying them home. The women were almost all adorned with new bonnets, which are here of the ugliest form I ever beheld, small straw pots with a flat straw curtain behind like a shutter.

We amused ourselves with walking in the fields near, but as we found little to interest us returned to hasten our guide and his horse. As it was now high-tide in the market every place was filled with horses and cattle, to shelter ourselves from which, we were obliged to stand between the shafts of our carriage, and keep off the

horned animals with our parasols as well as we could. One of the farmers very coolly fastened his cow to the baggage behind, while he went into the *cabaret* hard by. At last our driver made his appearance, apologising for his long delay, which had been caused partly by the neglect of the stable-boy in not attending to the horse, and partly, or chiefly as he confessed, from the fact of his having met with some friends at the fair, with whom he had been gossiping; the wine, he said, was too bad to drink, which we were not sorry to hear, as we had had rather uneasy suspicions during his absence.

From Courpière to Oliergues the country is beautiful, varied and rich, and picturesque in the extreme.

Our way lay principally by the side of the lovely little mountain torrents of the Durole and Dore, whose beds are filled with rocks, over which the waters rush with impetuous vehemence, forming an uninterrupted series of waterfalls. The road is very good as far as it goes, and will be excellent when the new one, which is now being made, is finished; a great number of workmen are employed breaking the rocks, excavating and cutting, and in a very short time it will be extremely convenient. We had, however, the benefit of its

infancy, and were sufficiently jolted as we wound our way beneath the wall of gigantic rocks which closed us in on one side. These rocks are of the most fantastic shapes, and, glowing with rich colours, seemed formed for a painter.

Nothing can exceed the beauty of the valley du Pont de Meymont, and the fine wooded mountain, at the summit of which is a village embowered in thick trees; to this secluded retreat a winding path leads, which makes the circuit of the almost perpendicular mountain. In the winter the forest sends forth its concealed enemies the wolves, the terror of the villagers who are obliged to descend into the valley on their different errands. Many a little Red Riding-hood has been scared in this region, and, doubtless, many are the stories told of hair-breadth escapes.

By the side of this rocky river may, no doubt, be often met with the dangerous *Laveuse de nuit*, popular here, as well as in Brittany, who is seen by moonlight washing linen in the stream which she rubs with a *blue magical stone*. She will ask you to help her wring her linen, and, if you consent with a good grace, the drops of water which trickle from it change to pearls and sapphires in the moon's ray, though when the sun shines

on them they disappear. If you refuse to assist her, she throws you headlong into the torrent, or if you hesitate, and then agree, she maliciously wrings the clothes the same way as you do, and your arm begins instantly to swell in a frightful manner; she then throws down her work, falls on you, breaks your arm and runs off with loud laughter.

We rested a short time in an inn at Olièrgues, the room of which was exactly such as one sometimes sees presented in a well painted scene on the stage in a melodrame. The open staircase leading to an upper room, the rafters and low roof, and the deep embrasure of the latticed window,—all were as picturesque as possible, and a young girl spinning added to it not a little. We were requested to ascend the stair into an upper room lately built, which overlooked a good garden, and seemed to be regarded as a magnificent construction by the good-humoured host, who welcomed his fellow innkeeper of Thiers with great cordiality, and led him over the new parts of his establishment with conscious pride, while the other turned a sly look towards us, evidently tacitly appealing to us, whether there could be any sort of comparison with his own Hôtel de l'Europe; certainly he had reason to be "vaunty," for his grand new house was worthy of a more

populous town than Thiers, and more fit, from its size, for Clermont, which can boast of few as good and clean.

While we sat in this boarded apartment which excited so much pride in the owners, a party of farmers came in and took their places at a table, where they ordered wine and began to make merry. One of them, a young man, presently took from his pocket a flageolet and began to play *montagnardes* and *bourrés* with great taste, keeping time with his sabots on the floor.

In consequence of our driver's delay at Courpière, we were overtaken by night and its mists, the numerous steep hills we had to cross making the journey a long one to Ambert. Our host indulged himself in asking me many questions about England, for whose natives, no offence to us, he professed to have a great hatred as they were *si fins et si traitres!* He seemed anxious to make himself master of our natural history, and was surprised to hear we had any grass and trees and *no wolves.* "You have no mountains either, I suppose," said he, "and the country I dare say is very ugly since you seem so pleased with this;" he paused a little, and on hearing an exclamation from us of admiration at the beauty of the rising moon in these solitudes—he turned round, and with a look half cunning and half incredulous,

he added—"Have you that sort of thing,"—pointing with his whip at the queen of night—"in your part of the world?"

As the way became dreary, and I was fatigued, and could no longer answer his questions, he began to sing snatches of tunes, and at last struck up an air of plaintive beauty, the words of which were charmingly sad. When he had ended it, I complimented him on his voice—"Ah!" said he—"before I married, there was not a young man in the whole country who knew so many songs, but I hardly ever have time to sing them now; we are so busy with the new hotel, and so anxious about its success." He repeated some of the *patois* words of other songs, much to our amusement, and told us that they had a good many poems written in ridicule of the Protestants, whom, however, he held in esteem. More than fifty, he said, had lately been gained over by an English Protestant minister, who had come to Thiers, with some French Protestants, who interpreted for him. "He must have been rich," added he, "for I got thirty thousand francs from our banker's for him while he was at our hotel; you English are all rich, and now I think of it I liked him too, and so I have all the English who have come to Thiers; but we all hate the nation because they laugh at us, and Louis Philippe

encourages them. We shall be very glad of a war, but you do not like it because then, you see, you will not be able to travel about as you do now, and no Englishman likes to stay at home."

This was unanswerable; and in such talk the way grew shorter, till we at length arrived safely at the hotel at Ambert, which was equal in accommodation to his own. It appears that he gave us the character of being such *braves gens* that nothing could exceed the civilities with which we were loaded at Ambert during our stay of several days, induced by illness rather than intention, as the damp night air of the mountains had had its effect, even in spite of the moon or the serenading.

Ambert is, however, so beautiful a place that a sojourn there is very desirable: its walks and drives are charming; it is entirely a new town, with wide open, clean, and handsome streets; stands in a picturesque and agreeable situation, surrounded by a belt of fine bold hills, and its rural scenery is most inviting. It can boast of a real modern saint, Père Gauchon, who lies buried in a chapel at the entrance of the town, and who performs miracles on the maimed and sick pilgrims who resort to his shrine. Our smart hostess expressed her opinion of the mat-

ter by saying, "the belief does no harm; every year the priests give a little money to some poor wretch who pretends to be afflicted, and goes away after a time, leaving his crutches behind him; then every one flocks to the chapel of the hospital, and is convinced that a miracle has taken place. It brings money to the charity, you know, and no one contradicts the story."

We saw a multitude of people, all women and children, going along the *grande route* to Père Gauchon's shrine the Sunday we were there; and the brilliancy of their costumes, their scarlet aprons, green and blue and lilac gowns, and white caps like snow, had an excellent effect as they walked in groups along the hill which led to it. Not a single man was amongst them, the superior sex contenting itself with politics and the constant inculcation of the duty of hating the English.

We left Ambert in a neat carriage, having parted with our vehicle of Thiers, with which our host returned the next day; and just as we were on the point of starting, the old woman to whom it belonged, and who had accorded us her son as driver, was seen by us to enter into a mysterious colloquy with the innkeeper who was putting us in. It turned out that she

had been considering that, as the road we were going was somewhat dreary, and our driver must return, it was not impossible that he might be robbed on the way, and it would be safest to secure the payment beforehand. Having settled this point, which left us in doubt as to whether our driver, a grown man, was not a natural, and one not to be trusted, we set forth, his mother having concluded her expressions of doubt by the remark, "*Après tout, mon ami, tu n'es pas un enfant.*"

If we were pleased with our former drive, this which we now took delighted us still more, for never had we yet seen a country so magnificently beautiful. Every league we advanced new charms broke upon us, and fresh enthusiasm was awakened. From the time we left Arlant till we reached our destination for the night, we passed through some of the finest scenery I had ever beheld.

At the foot of a range of gigantic rocks runs murmuring along the beautiful little river Dolore, one of the branches of the Dore: nothing can exceed the richness of colour displayed on the surfaces of these rugged rocks; every shade of lilac, purple, and crimson, of orange, yellow, and umber, occurs in their bold and finely-formed masses. Larch, beech, aspen, and firs of different species

grow luxuriantly from their fissures, and clothe their steep sides down to the emerald meadows which spread their soft carpet by the side of the shining stream, whose course is a constant succession of curves, as it disappears and sparkles forth again between its circling hills. Every here and there a fine one-arched bridge appears thrown over it, adding to the grandeur of the scene by its proportions; the road every now and then is protected by strong walls, which extend along the edge of the ravines, and are very necessary to secure it against the torrents from the rocks above, from which occasionally large drops come glittering down in minute falls, as from the roofs of grottoes.

For several leagues we pursued this beautiful mountain road, which sometimes winds so much as nearly to meet the point it had left half an hour before, and from which a deep gorge separates it, filled with luxuriant foliage, and disclosing the concealed river in its bosom.

Higher and higher still we continued to ascend, mountain after mountain seemed to sink down in the distance as we advanced, and we paused from time to time in rapture at the scenes unrolled, as it were, beneath us. We walked up a great part of the mountain, admiring its beauties and the total solitude of our position,

for we had met no one for many hours, when suddenly the sound of wheels was heard, and down the mountain came rattling a carriage filled with priests, who were chatting and laughing as gaily as no doubt their rich brethren of yore, of the monastery of La Chaise Dieu laughed, when they regaled themselves with all the good cheer which the overflowing wealth of their abbey afforded them. We had now been nearly three hours constantly mounting, and our guide, whom we found a simple but intelligent creature, and an enthusiastic admirer of nature, assured us, that we had not near reached the summit of the great mountain of La Chaise Dieu. There was another beyond this, he said, still higher, called Pierre sur Haut, from whence, in a clear day, *with a good glass*, "*on peut voir les portes de Paris !*"

Thicker and thicker now grew the forest round us, and deeper and darker crowded the large high pines on each side of our broad smooth road. Our guide then began to tell us stories of the devastations of wolves and *loup-cerviers* in these parts, and of the ravages of a *lionne* who was the terror of the country for miles round. It was only last year that this formidable beast rushed forth from her lair, as a waggon was passing through the forest, drawn by oxen,

and so impetuous was her attack, that she rushed upon the horns of the animals, and killed herself. The singular fact of a lioness appearing here was explained, by her having been supposed to have escaped from a menagerie which was being transported across this part of the country.

These were the forests, and this was the mountain, infested of old by the robber-chief Blacons, lieutenant of the terrible Baron des Adrets, when, more fierce than a raging lion, accompanied by his ferocious band of depredators, along this way, then probably scarcely passable, they forced their horses up the steep ascent, on their road to attack the famous abbey, where they hoped to enrich themselves with treasure.

From this mountain, throughout the whole extent of the department of La Haute Loire, which we were now entering, every inch of ground has been the scene of strange adventure. The ancient province of Le Velay here begins, the Gévaudan and the Forez spread wide and far, and now all around, near and distant, are scattered those mysterious mountains which once sent forth from their craters blazing signals to each other, when the world was young and chaos reigned. On the summit of every extinct volcano, ages after they had ceased to burn, rose a feudal castle, kept by some grim baron, whose

ravages were little less in the country than was committed by the boiling lava which poured down the sides of every hill, and whose hardened recesses tell the wild story of their former state.

From hence to Le Puy, the city of basaltic columns, all is wonderful and fearful, but I must not trust myself to relate any of the histories connected with these sites, till I have described the country in which so many singular events took place. I must therefore beg my readers to enter with me the extraordinary village of La Chaise Dieu, where we stayed to examine all that was to be found curious in one of the most savage retreats which these wild regions can present.

The high towers of this singular place rose slowly in the distance as we approached; some round and lofty, some lower and more massive; and above all, one enormous square mass, which reigned in sovereign majesty, its turrets and machicoulis fresh and sharp, as if just renewed, towering over the scene, and commanding the whole country for leagues round.

CHAPTER IX.

La Chaise Dieu.—Cup of St. Robert.—Le Cheval Blanc.—Primitive Repast.—The Night.—The Monastery.—Dance of Death.—The Hand.—The Bishops of La Chaise Dieu.—Vengeance after Death.—St. Paulien.—Etruscilla.—Polignac.—The Mask.—St. Didier.

La Chaise Dieu is a little ruined town or rather village once celebrated for a magnificent abbey of Benedictines, which was the richest and most powerful in the country. About the middle of the eleventh century Saint Robert, then a canon of Brioude, resolving to signalise himself by some extraordinary effort of self-denial, retired with two of his disciples to the most elevated part of the enormous mountain which we had just crossed where, on the plateau covered with snow during the greater part of the year, in the midst of these gloomy forests of eternal pines, they built themselves huts of branches and devoted their lives to prayer.

The fame of their sanctity spread abroad, and numerous sinners being seized with fits of resolute penitence, desirous of emulating the example of these holy men, came to their retreat and en-

treated to join their community. The number of these sinner-saints increased to such a degree that St. Robert began to consider the expediency of building a place for their reception, and choosing a desert spot where the stream of the Sénouire waters the soil he began to construct his monastery. The church was dedicated to St. Rancon in 1052, and the establishment consecrated by Pope Urban II. in 1095.

The fervour of the monks and their rigid observation of the rule of St. Benedict was rewarded by rich donations from the great lords of the neighbourhood and the wealthy inhabitants of all ranks. In a short time a town was formed round the monastery, to which St. Robert gave the mystic name of *Case-Dieu*, Casa Dei. More than three hundred monks filled the cells, and in a short time this convent became the most important in Auvergne, and one of the richest in France. Raimond de St. Gilles, Count of Toulouse, who so much distinguished himself in the Crusades, and who is celebrated by Tasso, before his departure for the Holy Land paid a visit to the Chaise Dieu in order to offer his devotions at the tomb of St. Robert, by whose intercession, according to a writer of the twelfth century, he had been recognised as successor to his brother William.

He entreated as a boon that he might be permitted to carry away with him the cup which had been used by the holy abbot; he was permitted to do so, and preserved it throughout the Crusade. He died in the Holy Land, but previously to his decease he charged a monk of the Chaise Dieu, who had followed him, to restore the precious relic to the abbey, to which he bequeathed magnificent presents. This identical cup was looked upon as one of the most remarkable relics of the fourteenth century, and was preserved in the church till the revolution scattered all its treasures.

It is said in the country that the steps which lead up to the church are placed as high as the summit of the Puy de Dôme, and tradition attributes this observation, erroneously however, to Pascal. That learned man quitted Clermont at the age of eight years, and did not again return to Auvergne during his life. The famous experiment of the weight of the air, on the Puy de Dôme, was not made by him, but, according to his instructions, by his brother-in-law Perrier.

Approach La Chaise Dieu which way you will, either from Brioude or Le Puy, you continue to mount the whole way; therefore the height of these steps is probably not exaggerated.

Our arrival was by a good broad open road by

the side of which stood a large *cabaret*, where we expected to be set down, but our guide had his instructions to deposit us nowhere but at a certain hotel, once inhabited for some weeks by a certain *Capitaine* who was employed by government to take the altitude of the mountains hereabouts, and who had given so good a report of his inn at Ambert that we were destined to be the reward. As the name of this phœnix of hotels was, however, forgotten, we stood still in the road while inquiries were being made. The owner of the *cabaret*, however, soon resolved the difficulty by directing us to his daughter's house, the Cheval Blanc, and, turning short round, we began a perilous descent into the village over rocks and stones, apparently left there from the passage of a mountain torrent.

Presently we reached a large court, at one side of which rose the great square tower which we had seen so long before us. Its height, size, and extraordinary state of good repair formed a strange contrast to the little low ruined buildings round it, and the impassable road leading to and from it. As at every step our horse now made the carriage was forced into a ravine of a foot deep, we clamoured to be let out that we might walk down the precipice which was to lead to the Cheval Blanc.

This we were at length permitted to do, and following our vehicle, which was tossed about as if on a stormy sea, we dived under a massive ruined archway, tottered along a path paved with huge irregular stones, marked with the traces of brasses and inscriptions, till we halted in a stable yard before the low door of a dilapidated cottage, where a buxom-looking woman was quietly sitting knitting. As she rose and welcomed our approach we concluded she was the landlady, as it proved. Stepping over a heap of stable rubbish and carefully avoiding sundry pools, for which the irregular pavement formed bounds, we climbed into a low black kitchen and there paused, asking in piteous accents of incredulity, if *M. le Capitaine Blosset* really passed under this roof those halcyon days of which he kept so pleasant a remembrance.

We were answered by several voices assuring us of the fact, and were overwhelmed with inquiries as to the well-being of *ce brave Monsieur*. We were instantly conducted up a stair, fortunately too black to distinguish objects of any sort, to the suite of rooms formerly occupied by this worthy, and in an instant the face of things was changed. Two very good old-fashioned chambers, comfortably furnished, received us, from the windows of one of which, spread out

as far as the eye could reach, a circle of magnificent hills, and a wide extent of glowing country; a gorgeous sunset lighted the scene with indescribable splendour, and we no longer wondered that the artist captain was pleased with his *séjour*.

Nothing could be more primitive than our fare here; excellent milk, soup, new-laid eggs, omelette, fruit, and delicious pudding accompanied a fowl, which our attendant assured us was crowing in the yard when we came, and would therefore be quite fresh, as indeed it proved. Our beds were extremely good, and we remained in a state of pleased surprise at the magical change from below to above; we ascertained with great satisfaction that our rooms once formed part of the ancient dormitories of the monks, and we felt that we were really reposing in the monastery of La Chaise Dieu.

Being fatigued we went early to rest; but our doing so seemed the signal for sounds so various, so loud, so strange, that we began to imagine the "terrible Baron" or his lieutenant Blacons, the great ravagers of these countries, had come back to earth, and was again battering the walls of the abbey. All night this tremendous uproar continued: if Blacons was there, his men seemed content with their quarters, for the singing,

shouting, beating the table, and shouts of laughter were ceaseless. Tired out with the noise we at last ceased to hear it, and

"Slept in spite of thunder."

We found in the morning that a grand *fête* had been given that night, by the farmers of the vicinity, to all the labourers newly employed to begin the corn-harvest; and, to encourage their exertions, as much wine and good cheer as they desired had been allowed them, and their hilarity and satisfaction at the quality of their fare had caused the murder of our rest.

All of the extensive monastery which remains, is scattered in ruins round the immense square tower of defence, and some buildings attached; now the *mairie*, belfry, and offices connected with the magistracy. The only part of the original construction in order, is the fine church, which is very lofty and of great extent, the windows of exquisite form, the arches and galleries and roof beautiful; the choir of most extraordinary size and length, with one hundred and fifty-six stalls of carved oak, more perfect than can be described,—their delicate details worthy of the hand of Gibbons—the canopies and *misereres* all of the same beauty, and totally uninjured. In the midst of this majestic

choir stands the tomb of Clement VI., the great benefactor of the abbey, who was educated at the Chaise Dieu, and had a particular regard for it. At the revolution the tomb was, of course, attacked, but the figure was preserved, and is very grand. The pope lies with his triple crown in great state. There are a few remains of other tombs much mutilated, but precious to artists for their fine execution.

The organ and pulpit are both extremely fine, and all this luxury of carving seems most singular in a place otherwise abandoned to decay; except in the choir, the floor of which is raised and boarded, the stones of the church are green with damp, as are the walls all round the space inclosed with a curtain of antique tapestry, where service is performed. This tapestry is very curious, and the costumes of an early date, but we sought in vain on the mouldering walls for the famous *fresco* painting of the Dance of Death, so often copied and engraved, and so admirable in its design. At Puy we afterwards saw several compartments well drawn and coloured by a young artist, who assured us he copied them from the walls not more than a year ago, but as they were then almost defaced, and the green mould and streams of humidity increase every season, they appear to

be now entirely gone. At least it required more resolution than we possessed, to remain longer in the chilling atmosphere of this beautiful church, and we abandoned the search in despair.

The cloisters, two sides of which still exist very perfect, are grand in the extreme; by moonlight and by sunlight, as we beheld them with the light streaming through their trefoiled galleries, and between their delicate pillars, nothing could be more solemn and beautiful. The high, long, and bold flights of stone steps by which the entrances are approached, are very peculiar, and prepared us for the same remarkable feature in the wondrous cathedral of Le Puy.

One portal particularly attracted our attention by its beautiful foliage, surrounding pilgrim's shells, the arch held up, as it were, by a gigantic *hand*, probably intended to represent the hand of God.

It seems Cardinal de Rohan was banished to this abbey, which belonged to him, after the affair of the diamond necklace; great part of the country in this neighbourhood was formerly possessed by the family of Rohan.

La Chaise Dieu was a very rich abbey, and the government of it was generally given to courtiers in high favour; the Cardinals de Tournon, de Richelieu, and Mazarin, possessed it as well as

De Rohan. While the latter was here a terrible fire broke out, which threatened the destruction of the town. The prelate contributed not only by his orders, but personal exertions to arrest its progress.

When the flames were entirely extinguished, a procession was made, in which the *head of St. Robert* was carried with great ceremony, and the cardinal cast himself on his knees before the holy relic, in the midst of the mud, much to the edification of all present. The bishop of Sénez, who was exiled here half a century before, at the age of eighty, for his resistance in the quarrels of Jansenism, passed *thirteen years* in these mountains, and died amidst their solitudes. A *lettre de cachet*, which was not to be opened till after his death, directed that he should not be buried in the church of La Chaise Dieu. His body was, therefore, placed in an isolated chapel near.

We quitted La Chaise Dieu on a fresh summer morning, and continued our way to Le Puy, through an agreeable country; we observed sheep with fine silky wool, feeding between the pines, as we crossed numerous steep hills which began to grow more rugged and barren as we advanced, but were succeeded by corn-lands and fields planted with potatoes; immense valleys stretched

far away towards other ranges of high mountains, and by degrees their peculiar forms came out along the sky. All were peaked with a slight depression at the highest point, as of a crater; in the distance they appeared of a transparent blue, and two, the farthest off, seemed like mountains of blue crystal towering above the rest. This was the two-headed Mazenc, the highest of the range, and one of the most important in the Velay.

On a sudden, at a sharp turn of the road, the apparition of a rock, detached and crowned with towers, made us start, but before we had time to utter an exclamation it had disappeared. We were amazed.

"If I stand here, I saw it!"

and yet neither our driver, who was equally struck with ourselves, or either of our party could distinguish a trace of the vision. Just before we entered the narrow defile of the stony street of St. Paulien, we again caught a glimpse of the pyramid we had given up as a dream, and now began to think it must be Le Puy itself, for we were prepared in seeing that town, to meet with something extraordinary, but we were deceived.

We drove through the main street of St. Paulien, having only just room to advance between the stone caves which serve for houses.

It looks as if scooped from a rock, the blocks cut into something like dwellings, and is the most rugged, ruined, hideous, quarry I ever beheld. Yet it was once a Roman city of great consequence, as the remains of ancient foundations, the armour, vases, urns, and medals, constantly ploughed up near, prove.

On the façade of a house built on the site of a famous monastery of Nôtre Dame de Hautsolier, is to be seen the following inscription, which once decorated the funeral monument of Etruscilla, wife of the Emperor Volusianus:—

Etrvscillæ
Avg: Conivg:
Avg: V.
Civitas Vellavor:
Libera.

which is thus rendered by M. Delalande:—"The free city of the Vellavians, to Etruscilla, the august spouse of our august emperor,"

Another funereal inscription is to be found on one of the pillars of the church; it is as follows:

"Rufinus Marius, son of Rufinus Marius, erected this tomb to the chastest of wives, Julia Nociturna."

In the middle of the great square is a stone

which has all the appearance of having been a Gaulic altar; in fact, the whole place would remind one rather of the Druids and their mysteries than of a refined and luxurious people.

We were now within a league of Le Puy, and advanced by the fine road which leads along the mountains to it, when, bold and grand, and unimpeded to the view, burst upon us the mysterious rock once more; and, at a short distance in the plain, a second, huge, red, and glowing as if cast from a furnace, Suddenly I recognised Polignac! yes, it could be no other; from description and from internal evidence, it must be the wonderful castle of which I had heard so much; the terror of the country, the abode of a race of tyrants, who had governed by force for centuries; the inaccessible basaltic mountain, out of whose fire-blackened masses had been hewn the temple of the God, from whence those oracles issued which had enslaved the world in times too remote to count from.

Polignac stood before us, — but how is it possible to describe it? We afterwards visited it in every part, and spent a long summer-day in the ruins on the heights of those rocks, the first view of which had so amazed us.

The castle, now a heap of ruined towers, stands on the top of a mountain formed by a

volcanic eruption, in the midst of an extensive valley. The sides of this mountain are almost perpendicular, of every hue that the action of fire can produce; and its huge masses are hurled on each other as if by the sport of giants, till they reach a point, on which the highest and strongest of the castle towers, the donjon, has been erected. These towers are of all sizes and forms, evidently built according to the exigencies of the moment, and scattered here and there from wall to wall, between huge blocks of basaltic rock, whose strength and size are wonderful; these form part of the building, and join the constructions which the hand of man has formed.

In the great square of the donjon, now overgrown with shrubs and grass, is an enormous well, sunk in the solid rock, forty-two French feet in circumference. Strange stories are told of this gulf, the interior of which is nearly choked up with weeds and shrubs, and clinging plants. A serpent of fearful size is said to have made it his abode, and sometimes issuing forth terrified the visitor to the ruins. This monster was at length destroyed, and we were assured we might look down with safety.

Half-way down this opening, adventurous explorers may visit a series of vaulted chambers

of singular construction, communicating with each other, and probably used by the priests of the temple said to have been here raised to Apollo, whence to deliver the oracle.

An altar was supposed to have existed over the mouth of this well, of which a curious piece of sculpture, discovered amongst the ruins, appeared to be a part. This is a large block of stone, on which a human face is rudely carved; the hair and beard in curls surround the countenance, and the mouth is represented as wide open, with an enormous hole in the centre, through which of course the hollow sound was sent which was to carry awe and terror to the souls of the hearers.

This stone is three French feet high, and three feet eight inches wide; it is preserved in a ruined building of what was once a chapel, and has a strange and terrific appearance. It is called in the country, *Le Masque d'Apollon.*

In an abandoned crypt may be seen the following inscription:

T. Clavidvs Cæsar Augv.
Germanicvs. Pont. Mag. Tri.
Potest. v imp. xi. PP. cos. iiii.

M. Delalande thus explains it:

"Tiberius Claudius Cæsar Augustus, conqueror of the Germans, grand pontiff in the fifth tribu-

nitian power, father of the country, general of the armies for the twenty-first time, consul for the fourth."

The church of Polignac, perched on a height immediately beneath the castle rock, is very curious, with fine circular arched doors, some of which have the zig-zag mouldings, which I had not met with since I had seen the Norman churches.

The red block opposite the castle rock, which rises out of the valley in the same manner, has no longer any vestige of fortification, though of course it must have formerly sustained a look-out tower of great importance, being on that side a key to the castle itself.

The wild panorama of countless mountains which throw their chains round as far as vision can reach, a whole *forest of hills* of all forms and shapes, near and far, altogether form a picture the wildest that imagination can conceive. Far off, and commanded by this gigantic mass, is seen the town of Le Puy, and its satellite the rock of Aiguilhe, placed like itself in the centre of a flat valley, and vying with it in the singularity and boldness of its aspect.

A crowd of recollections rush upon the mind, of ages past away, while gazing from the stupendous height of Polignac, of which even Arthur

Young, mere agriculturist as he was, speaks in terms of poetical enthusiasm. "No castle in France," says he, "is so calculated to excite pride; no man could possess such a magnificent place without it; and if I had such a name and such a possession I would not give it for a province!"

Great, powerful, and turbulent were the lords of Polignac for centuries. Here kings were entertained; here troubadours tuned their lutes; here Courts of Love were held, and beauty and valour triumphed. Here the poet Guillaume de St. Didier celebrated the charms of Marquise, the beautiful wife of the Count de Polignac, sister of the poet-Dauphin of Auvergne, and of Azelais de Mercœur, the beloved of the illustrious troubadour Pons de Capdueil.

St. Didier was a native of Le Velay, châtelain of Veillac or Noaillac, and was distinguished as a brave knight, as well as one of the most accomplished poets of his time, graceful, polished, liberal, and gallant. He conceals the real name of the Dame de ses Pensées, under the assumed one of *Bertran*. Hugues le Maréchal was his only confidant, and he called him also Bertran in his verses, to mislead the curious, and throw a mystery round his meaning.

In an evil hour he ventured to address poems to the Countess de Roussillon, and lost the

love of the fair lady of Polignac; his friend also proved untrue, and revealed his passion to the world. The following are some of his verses, addressed to the Lady of Polignac.

CHANSON.

I will not mourn the woes I knew,
When love was long the slave of fear,
Since from her gentle lips I drew
The fond confession, sweet and dear;
All my past discontents are gone,
And now I live for joy alone.

I have forgotten, since that hour,
That in the world there yet may be
Some other fair, whose eyes have power
To wound another, charmed like me.

When at her feet I trembling lay
And scarcely dared to raise my eyes,
Her smile drove ev'ry dread away,
And woke my soul with sweet surprise.
Since then, to other beauty blind,
I see but her in womankind!

The following is sufficiently quaint:—

COBLA,*

IN HONOUR OF THE LADY MARQUISE.

Beautiful is she I sing,
Fair her lands and tow'rs of fame,
Manners, conduct, everything,
—And how beautiful her name!

* From whence *couplet*.

Her words, looks, smiles, to beauty all belong,
And beautiful, for her, should be my song.

There is a tradition, too likely to be true, that the treacherous friend of St. Didier having revealed to the Viscount de Polignac the mutual attachment of his lady and the gallant troubadour, the jealous and cruel lord caused Marquise to be shut up in one of the towers of his castle, and after keeping her there some time had her hanged in iron chains! A sad finale to the joyous days, all sunshine and delight, when the imprudent fair one listened to the strains of adulation which raised her to a goddess, and when she presided over those brilliant courts of which she was the Queen of Love. So savage was the time, in the midst of so much grace and refinement—when poesy and murder seemed to go hand-in-hand.

CHAPTER X.

Le Puy.—Place du Breuil.—Cathedral.—Nôtre Dame d'Août.—Costume.—Lameness.—Lace-makers.—Sumptuary Law.—Heresy.—Punishment.—Psalm-singing.

All the approaches to the extraordinary town of Le Puy are beautiful and imposing. After winding round a precipitous rock on the summit of a majestic mountain for some leagues, by an excellent road, bordered with pieces of basaltic pillars for posts, you suddenly come to an opening, and, the intervening mountains left behind, the glorious plain of the three valleys bursts upon the view.

The town is built in the form of an amphitheatre, on the southern side of Mont Anis, which has for its crest the basaltic rock of Corneille, an enormous mass, covered with houses and buildings nearly to its highest point, where the crumbling ruins of a feudal castle totter above the pointed peaks and threaten to fall with every blast. The majestic cathedral is

perched in mid air, and the steep streets of the town circle it in all directions, forming a dense pyramid, which it appears almost impossible to reach. A beautiful wood, belonging to the grand *Séminaire*, throws a broad mantle round the mountain on the eastern side, and the spires and towers which bristle the surface offer a strange and menacing appearance. Close beside the great mount rises abruptly from the plain the high pyramidal rock of Aiguilhe, bearing the fine-stained marks peculiar to this part of the world. There appears no access to its perpendicular summit, yet there stands, raising its majestic tower to the skies, a temple hewn in the solid rock, dedicated in later years to Saint-Michel, but once to Osiris and Pagan worship.

The Loire, the Borne, and the Dolaison roll their shallow waves over rocky beds, and render the valleys a sheet of emerald verdure. Villages, beautiful in the distance, and in the most picturesque positions, are dotted here and there; woods and mountains stretch far away, and on every side the aspect of the country is grand and imposing in the extreme.

We descended the long and high mountain from which we beheld the first view of this surprising town, and drove along a very wide and

handsome boulevard, on each side of which were good shops and fine buildings, — all modern. We passed a very antique *porte*, with towers and heavy machicoulis, and found that all the ancient town was within where that grim old sentinel still kept his ground. We stopped in a magnificent square, called the Place du Breuil, of enormous extent and fine form. Several splendid public buildings adorned it, and others are in the course of erection; a beautiful walk, planted with trees, leads from the centre of one side, and the whole is bounded by a fine bold range of hills.

The Hôtel du Palais Royal, where our journey ended, was one of the finest we had yet seen; our apartments were superb, both as to position and arrangement; the windows affording a prospect of all the mountains and fine buildings we had observed. A remarkably handsome landlady and obliging landlord did the honours of their establishment with such cheerful good-humour as to be quite inspiriting to wearied travellers, and we sat ourselves down quite delighted with our good fortune, and resolved to spend some time at one of the most agreeable and promising places we had yet seen. Nor had we reason to repent our resolution, for every day some new object of interest excited us, and we had fresh cause to be satisfied.

Many a traveller, whose route to Lyons lies through Le Puy, and who merely stays a night, or only changes horses in the fine open part of the lower town, has little idea of the strange, stony, precipitous labyrinth which runs winding above to that strangest of all erections, ancient or modern, the cathedral of Nôtre Dame du Puy.

We entered one of the numerous streets which open to the boulevard, and, like rays from the central sun, emanate from the great temple itself. After half an hour's climbing, almost on hands and knees, up alleys paved with broad pieces of lava, irregularly piled on each other, through streets narrow, dark, filthy, and inodorous beyond all power of description, we reached the first flight of steps which lead to the cathedral.

A magnificent vaulted arch of twenty *mètres* high rises over a flight of one hundred and eighteen steps; these lead to the principal door, supported by fine columns of red porphyry. This is not, however, the present entrance; to gain which it is necessary to mount still higher, and at length the church is entered. Everything about it tells of its Pagan origin; the height and form, the capitals of its pillars, its porches and columns. All is modern within, and in good taste; the altars handsome, and the decorations appropriate; the organ and the pulpit

finely carved; and though no statues or tombs remain, the appearance is altogether venerable and grand.

One entrance by the side of the elevated archbishopric has a pillared porch of great interest, presenting features of Indian architecture quite unique, and having the appearance of the approach to some Eastern monument of importance. The wooden doors at this side are grotesquely carved, and of great antiquity.

There is an ancient carved cross in the small square of the *Evéché*, the base of which looks very like an altar of some bygone worship, and this solitary, secluded, and monastic nook, perched in the clouds, from whence a wide view of the surrounding mountains is gained, is one of the most mysterious *aëries* in which I ever rested.

The principal façade is ornamented with black and white mosaic, in a similar style to that of Nôtre Dame du Port at Clermont. The effect is very curious, but not pleasing to the eye. The bell tower is an isolated building; it is square, and its sombre hue gives it a character of great solemnity: its form terminates in a pyramid of considerable height, which has an imposing effect from a distance.

During the time we were at Le Puy the fête of Nôtre Dame d'Août took place, and the usual

concourse of pilgrims arrived to pay their devoirs to the miraculous Black Virgin, said to have been brought here by St. Louis from the Holy Land. The original black figure is asserted to be still in existence, although nothing but a miracle could have preserved it from all the enemies which for ages have attacked and devastated this town from time to time, to say nothing of the great revolution. The same belief, and the same superstitious observances take place here as at Nôtre Dame de Liesse near Laon, at Ambert at the tomb of Père Gaychon, and many other towns in France, and in the same proportion an equal disbelief and contempt prevails amongst the better class, and almost universally amongst the male sex.

The Cathedral, in the days of its prosperity, contained numerous precious relics, amongst them was *the lance* that pierced the sacred side, a trophy from the first crusade; one of the myriad pieces of the true cross; a bit of *the sponge;* a cup in which the Saviour had drunk; the cloth of the last supper; a vial of the Virgin's milk, one of her shoes, and a sleeve of her gown; some fringes of the robe of the Lord, and a piece of the manger; a tooth of S^te^. Magdalen; a bone of Lazarus; six bodies of the eleven thousand virgins; a piece of the camel's skin worn by St. John, and the finger

with which he pointed, saying, "Behold the Lamb!"

Besides these, were formerly shown some hair of St. Louis, quite white; a pitcher from the marriage of Cana; the horn of St. Hubert; the skull of St. Sigismund of Burgundy, and *the pectoral, fringes, and bells of Aaron, brother of Moses*, which weighed twenty-one marks of gold, and was adorned with precious stones. Amongst the offerings from great princes, was a crown, given by John Stuart, Duke of Albany, worn by him, when Regent, during the minority of Mary Stuart.

This cathedral was said to have been consecrated by the angels themselves, for, when finished, and the bishop and his priests had the doors thrown open that they might enter, they heard unknown voices chaunting praises to God, and beheld the church illuminated by unseen means, while a rich perfume from the miraculous oil in the lamps spread its odours through the aisles.*

It was St. George, the first bishop, who presented the treasure with the shoe of the Virgin, which was the earliest relic it possessed, and, *by miracle*, its fellow was afterwards added.

* A similar miracle was performed at Westminster Abbey when first finished.

Clovis II., Charlemagne, Louis de Debonnaire, and Charles de Chauve, made frequent pilgrimages to this shrine. Under the dominion of Bishop Bernard de Ventadour, 1254, St. Louis came to Le Puy, and was shown the relics, when the people crowded in such numbers that one hundred and forty persons were suffocated; on this occasion a chapel was founded, and a mass was established for their souls.

Louis XI. had great devotion towards Nôtre Dame du Puy, and established the custom of ringing and saying the Angelus in the church three times a day.

It is asserted that the miraculous image was made by Jeremiah, in a moment of prophetic enthusiasm, and that he had it placed in a chapel, with an inscription in Hebrew, announcing to future ages the birth of Christ and his holy mother. The original figure was of brown cedar-wood; it was *washed* every Good Friday with *wine and water*, and clothed with crimson and jewels, and splendid crowns placed on its head and on that of the child. Volumes have been written about it, and disputes without end have existed as to who was the donor of this precious figure to Le Puy; some say Dagobert, some Charlemagne, and that he received it from Haroun-Al-Rashid. Some say Louis le Jeune

gave it, others Philip Augustus; but it appears to have been at length agreed to accord the honour to St. Louis.

At present there are but few, if any, relics; but we were shown some very splendid dresses, presented by Charles X., and lately others, by Louis Philippe, and some fine plate; the sacristan seems proud of these, but mourns sadly over the changes which have occurred to this cathedral, once, and till the revolution, the richest in France.

On the occasion of the fête of Nôtre Dame d'Août countless were the numbers of the peasantry, almost all women and very aged men and children, which crowded the steps of the cathedral; and so dense was the throng within, that it appeared impossible for another creature to be introduced amongst the standing multitude. On every platform which divides the different series of steps mounting to the entrance of the church, were booths arranged on each side, filled with the usual holy toys of the meanest description eagerly bought by devotees.

From the last step of the cathedral to the entrance from the lower town, all along the wide and dangerously precipitous street, *en face* were hundreds of peasants in their holiday costumes, hurrying to mass from every village for leagues

round. Very picturesque and singular is their appearance. The women wear generally dark gowns, with rich coloured aprons and handkerchiefs, scarlet and geranium prevailing amongst them. Their white caps are small, and neatly quilled or plaited, bound round the head with a very broad coloured riband, tied in a bow in front, and surmounted by a little black, flat, felt hat, about the size of a desert plate.

This hat is always worn on the front of the head, a little shading the eyes, and is trimmed according to the taste or the caprice of the wearer. Ordinarily it is lined with red or green, and edged with velvet or chenille; it has a band of the same, which is sometimes fastened with a gold buckle, and some of the rich peasants have a plume of black feathers standing upright, placed all round the minute crown; occasionally a gold sprig is introduced amongst the feathers, and sometimes the ornaments are of bugles.

Nothing can be more bizarre and strange than this head-dress; it is singularly striking, and rather pretty when unadorned, but has a flaunting, vulgar effect, when covered with the forest of trimming which is considered a mark of dignity and wealth. To see these women arrive, as we did constantly in the Place du Breuil, mounted astride on their great heavy chargers, their scarlet

aprons flaring in the sun, the plumes of their odd little hats nodding in the wind, and their panniers at their sides, was one of the most amusing sights imaginable.

On the occasion of the fairs and cattle markets, which are of too frequent occurrence for the peace of the quiet-minded, the whole of this immense square is filled to overflowing with peasants and their cattle, when the *coup-d'œil* is surprising, and certainly would delight a painter. The men are neatly enough dressed, in blue jackets and trousers, with a bright-coloured waistcoat, open collar, and large black sombrero. Others are in red woollen caps and blue round frocks. When it is remembered that these people all speak and call at the very top of their voices, the *charivari* created by this concourse in the *grande place* may be conceived. Men rushing about, bearing in their arms refractory pigs, hallooing to others which are running between the legs of bullocks, cows, horses, asses, mules, and sheep; the roaring, bellowing, screaming, scolding that ensues—the countless buyers and sellers, the eager bargainers, the vociferous meeting of friends, the furious disputes of rivals, the shrill cries of children, the beating of drums, the *huées*, the urging, the recalling, the *patois*, the laughter—altogether such a scene is beyond description, and when witnessed not easily forgotten.

It is lamentable to observe how many of the people are lame: we stood one day at our window to observe the proportion, and found that ten out of twenty who passed were thus afflicted. The truth is, that their towns and villages are in such a stony, dilapidated state, and generally so precipitous, that the children fall and injure themselves at an early age, and never recover the effects of their accident.

The women are said to be handsome in Le Velay, but, though they are generally upright and strongly built, and walk well, *when not lame*, there are very few pretty faces to be observed amongst them, and the men, though a robust race, are neither well made nor good-looking. The *goître*, however, is less frequent here than nearer Clermont, and the manners of the people seem a degree milder and more simple.

It is curious to see the female inhabitants of this singular town sitting at their doors in groups in the silent and noiseless streets of the upper division, where no carts or barrows or horses can mount the perpendicular alleys, rugged and stony and narrow as they are. Here they sit with their lace pillows on their laps, rattling their bobbins and chattering in unintelligible *patois*.

M. Mandet, the historian of the civil wars of Le Velay, has given some interesting information relative to this and other subjects connected with

the town, which it may be pleasing to the reader to know.

The progress of the change in religious opinions, and the fortunes which attended the town of Le Puy during the religious wars, are told by him with much animation.

For many ages the occupation of making lace has been carried on in Le Velay; it is the most lucrative trade that can be pursued by the inhabitants of these cold mountains, and its origin is of very distant date. This small district, inaccessible during more than half the year, was in early times necessarily obliged to depend on itself rather than on strangers. Auvergne, Languedoc and Le Forez, hemmed it in on all sides, and though those countries were rich enough to have supported the industry of Le Velay, the state of warfare into which they were plunged during a long series of years, prevented them from affording assistance to their neighbours; for ravaged, pillaged, and ruined by rich and poor, by barons, priests and brigands, they were not in a state to do more than exist themselves. The same dangers and desolation were the portion of the peasants of Le Velay, who during the season of snows were glad to seek refuge within the protecting walls of some fortified town; there alone

could they in safety carry on their labours and enjoy the consolations of their religion.

While the women, with the prudence of the ant, came at the beginning of winter, charged with provisions, to establish themselves in the neighbouring city of Le Puy; the men with their wallet and staff emigrated farther off, some going to seek their fortunes at Lyons, Nismes, Toulouse, and Montpelier. Some, however, remained with their families at Le Puy, and took up their abode in the Rue des Laboureurs, obtaining permission to open taverns near Nôtre Dame, or engaged as apprentices to blacksmiths, canvas-makers, curriers, parchment-makers, dyers, weavers, pin-makers, so that whether it was a good or bad year they were sure of a living. As for the females, they divided themselves into companies, chose a lodging, adopted a rule, placed themselves under the protection of a Saint, and appointed one of their body to act as their superior, and in this manner they passed the day in labour, in the greatest order and with the strictest economy. Seated round a large chamber, they held on their knees a lace pillow, repeated their prayers, talked, related stories and continued working, just as they may be seen at the present day, sitting in groups at the doors of their houses in the old town.

All through the winter this was the rational plan pursued by the peasants of Le Velay, in the middle ages; but as soon as fine weather began every one set out for his cottage, and changed his manner of living.

This species of industry which occupied so many hands during the dead season, and placed the country-people in so prosperous a position, all on a sudden was put a stop to by the sumptuary laws of 1547. Persons of rank were alone allowed in future to wear jewels, embroidery, or lace. Alas! it was not for the great that the humble workmen of Le Puy, and the poor lace-makers of the mountains laboured so constantly. Great, therefore, was the consternation in Le Velay at this news. What was to become of them? —their 'occupation gone,' heavily taxed and surrounded with perils, seldom sure that their harvests or any of the productions of the earth on which they bestowed their care, would not be the prey of some marauder, yet having all other means of support cut off. To add to their griefs, that very year was peculiarly hard; the vines were destroyed by hail, corn was dear and there was no work. Every one deserted his hearth: even the consuls quitted the town of Le Puy, leaving the care of 'administration' to whoever would undertake it.

Murmurs low but deep were heard, there was much suffering, and when the people are without bread they lend a ready ear to all complaints which seem to sympathise with their own. The wretched easily understand each other. It is not, therefore, surprising that when the mountaineers returned to their deserted dwellings, they should be, as an old chronicle expresses it, *mal-embouchés*, and talk of oppression and the necessity of reform.

The doctrines of Luther and Calvin had been already received with favour in the Vivarais, and the emigrant Velaunians had heard much which they brought home with them as a mysterious acquisition. At the same period some of the clergy began to be imbued with the new doctrines, and ventured to deliver their opinions openly.

It was not that the mountaineers comprehended the full force of the various existing doctrine, or that they preferred one faith to another; but, with a change of religion, they were aware that civil emancipation would ensue. Le Velay was governed by its bishops, and every species of tyranny and injustice was practised by them on the groaning people. The lords exercised their rights with equal rigour and without a shadow of feeling or regard for their vassals. The monks of Chantenges sallied forth at night from their fortified convent, and pillaged tra-

vellers: the clergy of Nôtre Dame set themselves in array against the citizens of Le Puy, and separated from them by means of high walls: all was governed by force and power, and the weak and poor were the victims.

In 1549 the first religious insurrection broke forth. A crucifix held in great veneration in the country, which was placed on the walls of the part of Puy called Breuil, was broken in pieces during the night. This act was evidently committed with a view of trying the people, and the apparent horror excited showed that it was premature; nevertheless, many, obliged to dissemble, who appeared shocked and irritated at the sacrilege, met together in obscure quarters of the town and discussed the merits of the case; it is even said, that they ventured to assert that [redacted]event was for the good of the people.

An expiatory procession was ordained, and much bewailing took place, whether sincere or not may be judged by what occurred not long after, when the oratory of the Place du Martouret was broken into, the crucifix destroyed, and the *ex voto* dragged in the mud: this happened in the very centre of the town. While the culprits were being sought for a fire broke out which destroyed near four hundred

houses, and this was considered a judgment from heaven for the outrage committed.

A free course was now given to power, and a resolution was formed to make examples wherever they could be procured; every theft, forgery, or murder was attributed to "ces infames hérétiques," with whom all crime appeared to originate; and as a crowning glory, two *scélératissimés hérétiques*, as Etienne Medicis recounts in his *Mémoires* of the period, were burnt at an *auto-da-fé* made of all the books, "pestiférés par les doctrines de Génève." More than twelve thousand persons, with the dignitaries of the town in their finest robes, assisted in the open sunshine of a summer's day at this sacrifice, while the houses were hung with tapestry, the windows garlanded with flowers, and the streets lined with kneeling devotees, who looked on with pi[illegible]xclamations of delight.

But in proportion as these rigorous punishments became more frequent the reformers of Le Velay threw aside their timidity: in gardens, in vineyards, in meadows they dared to assemble and preach their new doctrines. Their ministers were butchers, masons, tavern-keepers, and other "vénérables docteurs de cette espèce," as Medicis calls them, and they continued their meetings in spite of the mockeries of the populace and the

dangers they ran. Regardless of all, they seemed anxious to attract on themselves the vengeance of the priests, attaching, as they did, rosaries to the necks of dogs, and sending them into the streets, breaking the images of the virgin, which they hesitated not to call "*méchante idole, tronçon de bois,*" &c.

The mountaineers of Velay, when they found that they had friends in the town, lost no time in forming a defensive league, which soon became offensive: they chose chiefs, collected ammunition and arms, and held themselves ready.

The day that the edict was published at Le Puy, forbidding all persons to sing the psalms composed by that *sacrilège apostat,* Clement Marot, the old rock of Corneille re-echoed the strains louder, shriller, and more violent than the heretics had ever sung them before, and open defiance was hurled at the tyrants who forbade them.

Nevertheless, a strong and influential body existed in the city who vigorously opposed the new opinions, and these united their strength against the enemies of the old faith; when, therefore, armed bands were seen in movement in all the neighbouring countries and towns, they set themselves about a determined defence.

CHAPTER XI.

The Terrible Baron.—Blacons.—Siege of Le Puy.—Armed Monks.—Church Militant.—Warlike Hermit.—Siege raised.—Chalençon.—Le Grand Justicier.

THE "terrible Baron des Adrets" at this period was a chief who had placed himself at the head of a numerous band of malcontents of all descriptions; and by his violence and cruelty, his boldness and promptitude, had become the scourge and terror of the land. Rich and renowned, always armed, always on the alert, his activity and reckless courage carried all before him. Twice he had made himself master of the town of Lyons, which he defended against forces far superior to his own. He took possession of Montbrisson, and, being much irritated at the resistance he met with from the soldiers of the garrison, ordered all he found to be thrown from a high tower. For his amusement as he sat at table, he commanded that some should be made to leap from the walls to their certain destruction: one amongst them,

having twice attempted the perilous leap, could not resolve to do it. "Come, come," said the jocose Baron, laughing, "twice is too much!"—"Twice too much!" cried the soldier. "I give you ten times, if you'll do it." The facetious lord was so entertained by the reply, that he granted the life of the devoted soldier.

His brutality, however, revolted many of the better order of Protestants, who felt that their cause was injured by having such a commander; but they were engaged in his service, and had gone too far to recede. The Baron had heard of the enormous treasure of Nôtre Dame du Puy, and also of that of the Benedictines of La Chaise Dieu, and he began to tire of wasting his strength in obtaining paltry booty when greater might be won. He had planned an expedition to Le Puy, and was on the point of commencing it, when he was obliged to turn his attention to another quarter.

He had, however, a captain, every way worthy of him, whom he deputed to act on this memorable occasion. Blacons, formerly a knight of Malta, was a man equal to any villany or any cruelty: he possessed all the vices of his chief, without, however, his courage or his talent.

As soon as the enterprise was announced, no less than eight thousand men hastened to place

themselves under the orders of the knight: these desperadoes were armed in the rudest manner, with pitchforks, scythes, and clubs, and arrived in bands of tens and twenties, barefooted, and scarcely clothed, each man speaking his own dialect, and only able to comprehend from each other where the greatest gain could be got: thus they stopped at farms, churches, and châteaux, pillaging and ravaging wherever they passed. It may easily be supposed that disputed points of religion had little to do with the actions of such adventurers; but, as they expected all from the downfal of the old, they readily ranged themselves on the side of the new opinions.

The general rendezvous was at Pont en Peyrat, a village on the frontiers of the Forez and the Velay; here they met, and, uniting themselves to the party of Blacons, prepared to march upon Le Puy,

These demonstrations were sufficiently public to have reached the ears of the consuls of the devoted city, who, dreading so formidable an array, and anxious as much as possible to spare the effusion of blood, attempted a negociation with the chiefs of the coalition. They fixed upon the Seigneur de St. Just, brother of the seneschal Christopher d'Allègre, one of the prin-

cipal men of the province. Though it was well known that St. Just favoured the Reformers, yet they had no suspicion that he would forget his own birth, the interests of his brother, or the name which had long been one of renown in the country. They, therefore, trusted him with four thousand livres, which he was charged to offer to Blacons to induce him to remove his men to another part, and leave them unmolested.

St. Just received the money, and promised to execute their commission; but what was their indignation and rage, when they learnt, four days afterwards, that the traitor had taken the gold, and placed that, himself and all his possessions, in the hands of Blacons: that, far from speaking in favour of the town, he was exciting their enemies against them, and, to crown his crime, was advancing at their head.

The consuls, bishop, chapter, and all the officers in authority, assembled to deliberate, for the danger was imminent. All suspected persons were arrested, guards were placed in the streets; on the walls and fortresses were placed engines of war, and a solemn procession revived the zeal of the faithful.

Arms were purchased with avidity by all ranks of men of armourers, who by good fortune were

in the town of Le Puy: provisions were collected, and every precaution taken to provide against a long siege: lanterns were ordered to be kept lighted at every sixth house, during the night, in case the attack should take place; the porticoes of all shops were to be destroyed, the trees cut down, and everything removed that might serve for ambush; every window was to be piled with stones ready for use as weapons; large quantities were carried to the turrets of the town; chains were made ready to be hung across the streets;—nothing, in fact, was omitted.

On the night of the 4th of August 1562, the inhabitants of St. Paulien came hurrying to the gates of Le Puy: "Blacons," said they, "came yesterday to our town, has taken it, and given it up to pillage. To-morrow he directs his course to Le Puy. Good people, may Nôtre Dame and le bon Dieu aid you!"

Day broke, and, advancing along the mountain side which dominates the wide plain where Le Puy and her attendant rock of Aiguilhe stand like giants keeping guard, were seen the rabble rout, guided by a renegade citizen of the town, one Jacques Collard, who had betrayed his fellows. The tocsin was sounded, and none failed to present themselves; but they looked in vain for the powerful Count de Polignac; they list-

ened in vain for his cannon, which should have saluted the rebels as they passed his eagle's nest on their way across the mountain. Polignac had looked from his eyrie in the clouds, and counted the number of his enemies. He considered that "the best part of valour was discretion;" he gazed at his young and handsome wife,—he thought of his eldest son confined in a dungeon for disputing his commands, and refusing to submit to the loss of his birthright,—he glanced at the infant whom he wished to make his heir, and he let the army of Blaëons pass his castle without attempting to molest them in their march.

The Huguenots descended the long, steep, and commanding hill, which showed them their prey beneath; they crossed the river Borne, then almost dried up, and encamped in a large plain called La Condamine, within a gun-shot of the ramparts. They thought to find the town unprepared, and were greatly amazed to see the warlike preparations which greeted their arrival. They instantly, however, began the attack, and the firing continued for several hours on both sides with great fury. Towards evening, however, the citizens found themselves overpowered by numbers, who pressed upon them, bore them down, drove them into the fosses, and they were about to make good

their retreat into the town when unexpected succour arrived. The *porte royale* of Panessac was suddenly thrown open, and forth issued a band of armed monks.

Dominicans, Capuchins, Carmelites, Cordeliers, all the denizens of the numerous convents, far and near, in the plains and mountains of Velay, when they heard that eight thousand Philistines were marching into the bowels of the land, had brought all their treasures to Le Puy, and placed them under the guardianship of Nôtre Dame and her towers, praying and watering her shrine with their tears. Suddenly, as they knelt in terror on the steps of her gigantic fane, a voice was heard to issue forth from some secret recess, crying "To arms!" Instantly the miraculous sound was repeated by every voice; breviaries and rosaries were cast at the foot of the altar, the monks rushed in a body to the arsenal of the archbishop, armed themselves with cuirasses and arquebuses, and descending the steep street with rapid steps suddenly presented themselves before the astonished enemy.

The advantage passed over to the citizens in a moment. The Huguenots drew back, lost their ground, and were fain to retreat, throwing themselves into the surrounding villages of St. Laurent, Espaly, and St. Marcel, intending on

the following day to complete the victory so nearly achieved.

Early next day the assailants re-appeared on the mountain of Ronzon, opposite the town; it was spread out before them like a fan, in such a manner that all appeared exposed to their attacks, but the Baron des Adrets had left with his captain only two indifferent pieces of cannon, quite insufficient for the undertaking. They were obliged, therefore, to abandon this promising position, and after changing their plan of attack several times, at length got possession of the little bourg of Aiguilhe, which nearly adjoins Le Puy, and is now one of its faubourgs, and, triumphantly scaling the almost perpendicular rock of St. Michel, sacked the church, destroyed the image of the archangel, and finished their day with this notable feat.

In a lonely cell upon the mountain of Denise lived an anchorite of great sanctity, who, in his youth, had been a distinguished soldier in the king's artillery. His adventures, his gallantry, and his hard-fought battles had been often a theme at the time; but the sackcloth of penitence had long replaced the brilliant armour of which he was once so proud, and the renowned soldier of Francis, bent with age and suffering, awaited only his last hour. The terrible news

that a body of heretics were attacking the city of Nôtre Dame reached even his secluded retreat; all the fire of his ancient courage blazed within him at the word, his wrinkled brow lost its pale hue, his trembling hands became nerved with strength, and springing to the rock where he had hung his rusted arquebuse, he once more seized the weapon he knew so well how to use in the defence of his country. Why should he not again display his power to shield the holy faith to which he had devoted his declining years?—what fasts or prayers could be more acceptable to the church than a crusade against her foes?

From the time he presented himself to the Seigneur de Maubourg, who accepted his services with grateful alacrity, the scene changed with the enemies of Nôtre Dame du Puy; his knowledge of warfare, his promptitude, his courage, his powerful arm and his unerring aim, did more service to the citizens of Le Puy than all they had hitherto attempted. The Huguenots demanded a parley, and, as they meditated treason, they chose a fit instrument in St. Just, whom they made their ambassador. His deceitful promises were, however, treated with proper contempt, and enraged at the failure of his mission he returned to his party and urged the attack as strenuously as possible. The be-

sieged were now, however, well directed, and withstood all the fury of these swarms of ill-disciplined troops, many of whom were taken prisoners in the sallies made by the citizens.

Blacons was much discouraged, and enraged beyond measure when he beheld collected on the towers all the consuls, gentlemen, and leaders of Le Puy, with the Count de la Tour Maubourg at their head, whose banners were waving victoriously, while minstrels, performers on the cornémuse, hautboy, fife, and clarion, were loudly playing airs of rejoicing which were distinctly heard by their discomfited enemies.

"We are mocked by these hounds of Le Puy!"—cried the mortified leader as he turned to his people, but he found few to listen to him; band after band had shrunk away, and were seeking retreat in the mountains, leaving behind them victory to the besieged town, and desolation in their track, villages burnt, convents destroyed, churches pillaged, and the whole country a blackened desert, and this in the name of religion!

The adventurer Blacons, after his defeat at the siege of Le Puy, was deserted by many of his band, and wandered about the mountains seeking easier conquests, when he was joined by an ally of whose assistance he had not

dreamt, no other than the son of Armand XII., Viscount de Polignac, called le Grand Justicier.

This great and powerful nobleman, the Lord of Polignac, was also Baron of Randon, and Randonnet in Gévaudan, and had large possessions in different parts of Auvergne; he was oppressive and tyrannical to the people, and had taxed and levied contributions on them without mercy, and in his quality of gentleman in ordinary of the king's chamber, and *panetier de France*, he had judged it expedient to transfer the seat of judgment on offenders to Paris, instead of suffering them to be tried in their own country; an arbitrary act, which caused the inhabitants to appeal against him to the king, who decided in their favour against the imperious noble.

His son, Claude Armand de Polignac, known as lord of Chalençon, was the issue of his first marriage with Anne de Beaufort. He was long the object of his affection, but in his old age he had married a young woman, dame Philiberte de Clermont Tallard, who brought him several children, and had obtained so entire a command of him, that he was induced to listen to her entreaties that Claude Armand should be deprived of his legitimate inheritance in favour of her son. The weak old man, a slave

to the jealous step-mother of his son, consented to all she wished, and insisted on Chalençon embracing the ecclesiastical profession and renouncing the world. Nothing was further than this from the thoughts of the high-spirited young man, who received the proposal with indignation, and positively refused to obey. His father yielding to the instigations of his wife, threatened him in vain, till at length, irritated at his firmness, he had him confined in a dungeon of his castle, there to remain till he had resolved to accept the conditions imposed on him.

Grief, rage, and outraged feelings urged Claude Amand to desperation. His resolution was taken, and having, by means of some attached domestics, obtained his liberty, he left the paternal roof accompanied by several of his devoted vassals, and, following the fashion of the day, commenced a career of adventure, attaching to his enterprise others bent on the same course. Determined to wrest by force from his unjust parent the possessions which belonged to him of right, he sought out the Chevalier de Blacons, declared himself his friend and companion, and a defender of the new faith.

Blacons was only too happy to associate himself with one of the first gentlemen in the

country. He listened to his complaints, shared his anger, and showed every readiness to espouse his cause. They therefore set out immediately together to attack the usurped baronies of Randon, and Randonnet in Gévaudan, as well as the little town of Genouillac, in the diocese of Uzès, of which the viscount was lord. Both there and elsewhere they exercised the most cruel ravages. It is recounted that after having razed to the ground a convent of Jacobins, founded by the barons of Randon, the monks were massacred without pity by the brutal followers of these two commanders.

Roused to activity by these outrages, the old viscount enraged at his son's conduct, and calling upon his vassals to take up arms, set forth to punish the criminal. So prompt and energetic were his movements, that Chalençon, intimidated by his presence, defended himself ill, and was completely routed.

This victory, however, gave but little satisfaction to the heart of the father, whose conscience told him who was in reality to blame, and late remorse took possession of his soul. He lamented his son's apostacy, he regretted his own weakness and severity, but he was unable to shake off the fetters which were wound around him, by a woman whose hatred to his son knew no bounds.

Unable altogether to subdue his natural tenderness towards his ill-treated heir, yet afraid to listen to the voice of justice, he sank beneath the conflicting emotions to which he was a prey, and died of grief, without having been able to open his arms to his unhappy child.

The viscount was much regretted by the nobles and clergy; to him they had looked for great assistance in those troublous times. The citizens of Le Puy forgot in his late expedition his abandonment of them in their need, and mourned his loss bitterly; but his vassals and dependants, to whom he was a severe lord, hailed the succession of young Amand, in place of him whom they had with justice named, for his hard administration of the laws, *Le Grand Justicier.*

CHAPTER XII.

Attack of La Chaise Dieu.—The Routiers.—The Three Saints.—Châtelain de St. Vidal.—Siege of Espaly.—Repulse.—Citizen Guyard.—Reprisals.—St. Voy.—La Rodde.—Bouzols.—The Combat.

THE project which the Baron des Adrets had conceived, of surprising the treasure kept at La Chaise Dieu, had been for a time abandoned, after the discomfiture at Le Puy; but when Blacons found himself reinforced by so powerful an ally as the Sire de Chalençon, he resolved to make the premeditated attack.

But the monks had been informed of their danger, and were prepared to meet it; great therefore was his surprise, on arriving at the village, to find its houses entirely deserted, every place empty, and all the inhabitants sheltered with the Benedictines in the great square tower which I have described, situated at the extremity of the surrounding walls, on the summit of the hill, in such a position as to command all the issues.

This tower which was built by Clement VI.

was considered one of the strongest, most solid, and most ingeniously constructed of the period. The monks had formed, in the interior, recesses of the most complicated description, in which their papers and treasures were concealed; they had an arsenal, a well, a kiln, and *greniers* filled with corn and provisions. The exterior was immensely strong; the *contreforts* presented so many impenetrable bucklers, and *meurtrières*, disposed along the walls, opened blazing mouths, at every instant, while high machicoulis defended the soldiers posted in the turrets, who guarded the approach of this terrible tower.

At his first approach Blacons was received by a discharge of musketry, which killed twenty of his men. Alarmed at this unexpected reception, the Huguenots hurried back to the village, and sought shelter in the houses, waiting till their scouts should have discovered with more certainty the state of things. A whole day passed in dangerous observations on their part, which they conducted in a manner somewhat timid; for not a soldier showed himself at a loop-hole or ventured to cross a street, that a shot from the fearful *meurtrières* did not reach him instantly.

The night was more favourable to the assailants: guided by the peasants, they discovered

that the walls which surrounded the abbey were not guarded, and that the whole garrison had taken refuge in the tower. As they feared an ambush they however advanced with caution, surprised to find that they were left masters of the place. Some of the most daring took the lead, the rest followed noiselessly, and at length all had penetrated without opposition into the convent.

The monks, considering their forces, and aware of the strength of their assailants, had adopted this plan with the hope of saving a part of their vast building, as they knew that to resist was to draw down certain ruin on the edifice: as their greatest treasures were in the tower, they left the rest to fortune and their prayers.

The *routiers* rushed with loud cries into the sanctuary, and the monks, in their retreat, could hear the fearful sounds threatening destruction, which they could not avert, to their beloved and superb monastery, which nothing less than the munificence of a pope could have erected. Armed with axes and brandishing torches, these savages hurried from place to place, eagerly seeking for the booty which they thought already in their grasp: they reached the cells, the refectory, the library, the archives—in vain; all was void. Infuriated with disappointment, they had resolved

to demolish the convent and reduce it to ashes, when by chance they stumbled on the cellars where the monks kept their wine. With brutal joy they seized upon this welcome prey, and a frantic revel commenced, in which nothing was respected;—the tabernacle was despoiled, the coffers containing the collection for the poor broken open, the doors of the sacristy forced, the oratory of St. Robert, which was said to be adorned with the richest offerings, searched—still in vain; not a vestige of treasure was discovered.

Blacons, mad with disappointment, vowed to revenge himself, which he did in a manner worthy of his character. By his command all the statues of the church were mutilated, from that of St. Robert himself, the patron of the country, to the benefactors of the convent, Jehan de Chandosat, the Count de Beaufort, Pope Clement VI., and others. The fine monument of the pope I have already named as now restored, and lying in its original place in the choir; it is of black marble, the statue white, clothed in full pontifical costume, with two dogs at the feet. One beautiful tomb of a queen unknown fell a victim to their fury; the figure they broke to pieces, what remains of its frame is exquisitely delicate: a daïs, supported by small columns crowned with foliage, was over the statue, two angels kneel at

the angles, and all round may be still seen, as if it were a frame, garlands of roses of open work, each enclosing a seraph, who is playing on some instrument of music. Below are six *pleureuses.* Surmounting all, are angels holding up a pall, and a naked figure rising amidst clouds.

The tomb of Marshal Lafayette, the respected Governor of Auvergne, was sacrificed; all the pictures and books that could be found were burnt, the fine painted windows demolished, and now the incendiaries approached the tower of refuge with loud cries, and issuing orders for a general massacre.

At this critical moment, Chalençon, who was posted as vidette, rushed amongst them and in a voice of consternation exclaimed—"The monks have been making flaming signals from their highest tower; the castles round have seen the blaze, they reply; and if we do not instantly retreat *The Three Saints* are upon us, and a fearful fête will they make!"

At this announcement terror took possession of the drunken assembly; Blacons himself trembled, for *The Three Saints* were known and feared as the most determined of their opponents: they were the barons of St. Hérem, St. Chaumont and St. Vidal, all sworn to exterminate the *routiers* wherever they could meet with them.

No time was to be lost, all that could be clutched was taken,—chandeliers, crosses and vases; an enormous statue of Moses attracted the greedy eyes of Blacons, as it stood glittering in the midst of the choir, where it served as a pulpit: he conceived it to be of pure gold, and thought this alone was treasure worthy to repay their trouble. Accordingly it was borne off; but as they proceeded on their way from this scene of savage outrage, a doubt crossed his mind that so considerable a mass could scarcely be real metal; he commanded a pause, had one of the thumbs sawn off, and discovered to his infinite mortification that the figure was only of copper gilt! Amidst the derision and brutal jokes of his followers the mass was thrown into a neighbouring lake, where forty years afterwards it was found by the Benedictines.

Hardly had the *routiers* thus disposed of their booty and escaped to the thick forest near, when they heard the bells of the abbey ringing a merry peal of rejoicing, for St. Hérem had arrived to their succour at the head of a numerous company. When they beheld the devastation around they set forth in pursuit of the fugitives, but already the favouring depths of the forest and the secure retreats of the mountains had afforded shelter to the unprincipled ruffians who dispersed for a time

to re-unite for similar outrages when occasion served.

The most remarkable character amongst those whose names struck such terror into the souls of these lawless men was St. Vidal, who deserves a particular description from the circumstance of his having for a long series of years acted a conspicuous part in the civil wars of Le Velay.

We were forcibly reminded of him on exploring the ruinous and rocky village of Espaly St. Marcel, on the banks of the river Borne; above is a basaltic rock which rises from the midst of the stone hovels, more like dens than houses, where we were amused to see the women sitting knitting, in their crimson aprons and flat hats, beside the *domestic dunghill* which adorns every domicile.

The picturesque ruins of the ancient castle in which Charles VII. was proclaimed king, are perched on the height, and have a fine effect from the antique bridge and the opposite shore. To judge from the appearance of this muddy, ruined, lava-paved, and fire-blackened village, one would say that it was now in precisely the same state as when left by the contending powers after its memorable siege.

Antoine de la Tour, Baron de St. Vidal, was of a very ancient family of those wild

mountain chiefs who looked upon themselves as monarchs of the country, and, provided their rights were not infringed, were content to let the world run on without reform or improvement. St. Vidal, unlike many of his neighbours of the rocks, had not been in the habit of oppressing his vassals, or levying contributions on them, nor had he been remarkable for making inroads on the property of others; for which reason none of the turbulent lords in the neighbourhood, not even the Polignacs, famous for their outbreaks, had ever openly provoked his resentment.

For twenty years that St. Vidal had lived retired in his fortified grandeur, he could not but have been aware of the national agitation passing around him; but he cared little for the disputes of religion, and meddled not, although a staunch Catholic, with controversy. Listlessly reclined behind his turrets, well-defended with cannon and arquebuses, he heard the confusion below him and heeded it not; but when the insurrection took a character of liberalism and proclaimed itself decidedly hostile to feudal power, he felt that his dignity would be compromised if he remained any longer inactive. To use an expressive metaphor of the pleasing historian of the Civil Wars of Le

Velay, M. Mandet—"At first his low growl was heard, and then his sullen roar; like a lion stretched out in a sunny place he did not care to be disturbed from the lazy enjoyment in which he existed; but when the Huguenots ventured to attack the castles of Le Velay, to drive their masters forth and establish themselves in their high places, all on a sudden, before his name had even been pronounced, he was seen bounding forth from his den, fury in his voice and his eyes flashing with indignant fire, and soon the whole region rang with his cry—'Destruction to those who have roused me!'"

Once brought into action there was no fear of this mighty chief relapsing into quietude. Associated with St. Hérem and St. Chaumont, they declared themselves the protectors of the old cause, and formed a league for the defence of the country. Heaven knows there was fearful retaliation made under the auspices of these three mountain lords!—they were constantly on the track of the rebels, hunting them down like wild beasts, and summary was the justice they executed when opportunity served.

Many defeats and signal punishments had for a time apparently subdued the spirit of the Reformers, and the country was slumbering in seeming tranquillity. Ten years had nearly

passed since St Vidal had been roused from his lair, and he had resumed his customary habits of hunting the wild boar and wolf, not finding higher game for his pastime.

His family consisted of several timid women, who looked upon him with reverence and fear: a son brought up in the same manner as he had been, unnurtured and taciturn like himself, with an exalted opinion of his own dignity: a troop of rustics, his attendants, accustomed to tremble at his frown and to obey his slightest sign, to whom he seldom accorded the honour of addressing a word.

St. Vidal was, in person, little, ill-favoured, very irascible, and generally in ill humour. His voice was sharp and harsh, his remarks short and abrupt, and his general demeanour uncourteous. If a smile occasionally lighted up his countenance, it assumed that indefinable expression of intelligence, cunning, and malice; which is a characteristic of the mountaineers of Le Velay, who, under an appearance of dogged simplicity, conceal more art and craftiness than they are usually supposed to possess.

St. Vidal was never known to change his costume. It was a dress of red woollen, closely fitting his shape, a waistcoat of violet velvet, a large black mantle, and a beaver hat with broad

edges. His belt was of buffalo skin, to which was attached a copper ring where his hunting knife was hung, and a pocket in which he carried his prayer-book, for he read with great precision the offices twice a day. He always wore golden ear-rings, and shaved his head; but to make up for this, he allowed his beard to grow to an immeasurable length, and cherished large red moustaches.

His expressions were forcible when the theme of his discourse was the vile *canaille* of Huguenots, for whom he could not find words sufficiently contemptuous and bitter.

Suddenly, in the midst of apparent calm, the Huguenots, in great force, no longer led by a desperado like Blacons, but regularly organized and in battle array, showed themselves in Le Velay, and advanced to the very gates of Le Puy, to the consternation and terror of its inhabitants, who soon learnt, with rage and fear, that Espaly and its castle were in the hands of the heretics. The Bishop of Le Puy, Anthony de St. Nectaire, hastened to use every means for defence, and his first act was to despatch the following letter:—

"M. LE BARON DE LATOUR ST. VIDAL.

"Be it known to you that the heretics, who have lately appeared in arms in several parts of

our diocese, have within the last twenty-four hours become masters of the town and fort of Espaly. Men whom our charity spared, have returned to their damnable practices, and delivered over to the rebels several of our places. Communications are already intercepted by bands of plunderers. Last night, in spite of the wind and the snow, our people made a sortie, but the darkness was so intense that they could not make their intended attack, added to which they find the Huguenots in greater number than they imagined. It is with difficulty we can repress the ardour of our youth; our councils meet frequently, but we can resolve on nothing. You, M. le Baron de Latour St. Vidal, must decide for us. Every one knows your valour and ability; no one more than myself. I, therefore, await your coming, accompanied with men of whom you can dispose. With the aid of God and your good sword we shall be strong. Fail not. We salute and bless you.

"ANTOINE,
"Bishop of Le Puy, Governor and Count of Le Velay."

"11th Jan. 1574."

When St. Vidal received this letter he called aside his brother Henri de la Tour d'Adiac, gave

him instructions respecting the levy of troops, took leave of his family, recommending himself to their prayers, and them to the care of his son Gilbert, mounted his charger, and issuing from his castle without once looking back, took the road, with the messenger to the town of Le Puy, accompanied only by a few faithful vassals.

Directed by this valiant and redoubtable chief, the siege of Espaly was undertaken by the men of Le Puy.

The town and rock had been betrayed to the enemy by a citizen named Guyard, and they were now in possession; but St. Vidal and his troops soon made themselves masters of the walls of the town, and entered triumphantly; the Catholic soldiers instantly pillaged all that the Huguenots had left, so that the wretched inhabitants were devoted to destruction by all parties. The incessant fire from the inaccessible castle, however, so harassed the besiegers that they were almost disheartened.

St. Vidal was resolved on a desperate effort. Followed by a dozen men, he fixed on a point of rock against which he planted ladders, and had already mounted, when a volley of artillery struck him in the shoulder, and he fell bathed in his blood. His soldiers, dispirited at this misfortune, placed him in a litter and prepared

to hurry him away, as they fled, when he called out in his agony of pain and rage, "We will come back anon, and then I swear to drive from yonder royal nest those infamous robbers who have dared to enter. Meantime, comrades, burn every hut in this village, break down every wall, and may God grant us a quick return!"

This humane command was joyfully obeyed; the wounded chief, though he suffered great torture, never ceased to give directions, as from hour to hour news was brought him of the proceedings.

A week passed in this manner; but it soon became evident that the Calvinists were resolved to maintain their ground, and those of Le Puy were in the greatest peril. The bishop decided that negociations should be entered into, and Guyard had the audacity to demand thirty thousand livres for the evacuation. This enormous sum was more than the town could pay, and the successful party was inflexible.

St. Vidal, finding that force availed not, adopted a plan which reflects little honour on him as a soldier or a gentleman: he caused a letter to be written, as if addressed to the consuls of Le Puy by Guyard, in which that citizen proposed to betray Morfeuse, his lieutenant, and all the

garrison for a less sum than he had demanded in public.

This missive was mysteriously sent to Morfeuse, who was known to be a choleric man. The enraged lieutenant waited till night. As soon as Guyard had made his round, and ascertained that his posts were in good order, he retired. It was then that Morfeuse assembled all his comrades in a lower saloon of the Château of Espaly, and displayed to their view the supposed proof of the infamous treason of Guyard.

A terrible scene ensued. At the dead of night five or six hundred rebels, armed with torches and poignards were assembled in the deep vaults under the castle, where Charles VII. was saluted king, to condemn their chief without hearing him speak a word in his defence—that chief who had rendered them a terror to more than twenty thousand citizens. His death was unanimously decided on, and the assassins, rushing into his chamber, with brutal fury, despatched the innocent man with a thousand wounds.

Morfeuse consented to give up the castle for far less than was at first proposed; a treaty was entered into, and the Huguenots, with little honour, retired from Espaly, leaving to St. Vidal the triumph of his treachery.

Whatever advantage St. Vidal had gained by his dishonourable proceedings, the example was not lost upon the *réligionaires*, of a band of their brotherhood having been able to dictate terms to a force so much superior. The ancient companions who used to desolate the country found emulators in new troops, who joined together and made themselves masters of numerous châteaux scattered amongst the mountains. A general invasion, in fact, followed the siege of Espaly; a set of wild adventurers sprang up like famished wolves and scoured the country from end to end, destroying everything in their course. Castle after castle became their prey, and they were once more the lords of the mountains.

Fury and despite at the successes of such a set of *canaille* urged the Châtelain de St. Vidal almost to madness. He had a double motive for vengeance—his wound scarcely healed, and the capitulation to which he was obliged to submit. He had been named governor of Le Velay, and had the whole power vested in himself; fearfully did he use that power, and bitterly did he revenge himself! No excesses that the "Terrible Baron" could have committed, no brutality instigated by his captain Blacons, could possibly be exceeded by the Châtelain de St.

Vidal in his pursuit of vengeance. Wherever he led his troops victory followed, and as surely every description of cruelty and wickedness, till, between the reprisals of both parties, Le Velay was a sea of blood and a chaos of ruin.

Town after town, castle after castle, he retook from the rebels, and every conquest was accompanied by new horrors. The taking of St. Voy,—for more than twelve years the asylum of the Huguenots of the frontier,—was attended with circumstances almost comic, in the midst of so much that is frightful to recount.

St. Vidal was resolved to terminate his victorious achievements by the extermination of this retreat. But no sooner did the *réligionaires* hear of the approach of the tremendous governor, than the reflection forced itself on their minds that they had no means of defence, — neither arms, walls, nor fortresses, — and resistance would be to them certain destruction. Some of the inhabitants had recourse to instant flight, the others resolved to put a good face on the matter and remain. When St. Vidal presented himself before the town he found the gates open; the church restored to all its former splendour, decorated as on a *fête* day; tapers burning before the altars, the priest

saying mass, and a large congregation prostrated on the floor of the church singing the canticles with loud voices. To the great disappointment of St. Vidal, he had no excuse for attacking them, and he was fain to leave the cunning citizens of St. Voy in peace.

St. Vidal, many years after this, met his death in a duel with a cadet and equally ferocious chief, who had replaced him in violence and severity, and with whom he had a dispute which death alone could end. This chief was called Pierre de la Rodde, cadet of the house of Séneujols, whose castle crowned the summit of one of the steepest mountains of Auvergne, and who had been attracted from his rugged sports of hunting the wolf and boar by the more exciting game which presented itself in the shape of men.

St. Vidal had declared himself at this period for the party of the League, and as much for that reason as for a better, La Rodde, who hated the Châtelain, had ranged himself on the side of the Royalists. This was in 1591, when the town of Le Puy was by turns in the hands of three parties, whose constant contentions made it the prey of anarchy and desolation.

It had been proposed by the consuls of Le

Puy, distracted with the continual state of danger into which they were thrown, to offer a large sum of money to Pierre de la Rodde *to cease his depredations* in the country. This St. Vidal strongly opposed, but while he thus drew on him the hatred of the marauding chief, he had not regained the confidence of the townspeople, with whom he was once all in all. But a great change had taken place, and those in whom the citizens formerly relied having more than once betrayed them to the stronger party, St. Vidal had fallen under their suspicion, and they even went so far as to imagine that this fierce Catholic was guilty of a design to deliver up Le Puy to the Huguenot King of Navarre.

Amongst the wild mountains near Le Puy, which we visited, we were shown the ruined castle of Bouzols, placed in a commanding situation, and still nearly entire. This place, St. Vidal, then governor of Le Puy, had taken possession of and fortified very strongly, filling it with ammunition and stores, in spite of the angry expostulations of the consuls, who claimed them as necessary to the defence of Le Puy. The châtelain would not divide his treasures with them. The Bishop of Le Puy, St. Nectaire, had also fortified himself at Polignac; and De Chaste, the seneschal, had defended himself in

Espaly. "It is clear," said the harassed citizens, "that all three are traitors; and Espaly, Polignac, and Bouzols, leagued together, wait only their opportunity to deliver our devoted town to the heretic."

Even the priests from the pulpit did not hesitate to denounce St. Vidal, and no words can express the fury which took possession of his mind when he found the opinion generally entertained.

"Wretched idiots that they are!" exclaimed he; "if I had ever desired it—if I desired it now, need I have recourse to artifice to destroy them in their holes? I have but to give the word, and every hovel in their town would be reduced to ashes, and every man hung to the first post!"

It had been agreed that the three heads of the government of Le Velay should meet to discuss the question, of the best method to appease the people, and reconcile the contending interests of all parties. It was then, that after a stormy and fierce interview, in which anything but peace was predominant, St. Vidal cast his glove into the midst of the assembly, challenging any who disapproved of his fiery words to meet him in single combat.

The challenge was eagerly accepted by six other combatants. De Chaste and Captain Rochette defied each other, and the young and

brutal La Rodde offered himself against the fierce old châtelain; who the others were is not named by the chronicler. An hour's truce was given, in which the knights were to settle their worldly affairs, but long before this time they were already prepared.

All eight placed themselves in battle array, each with a poignard in one hand and a rapier in the other. The cold was at that period intense, the meeting was in the open air; in spite of this they had divested themselves of their hats and doublets. De Chaste, who was a *raffiné* of the school of Henri III., although a valiant soldier, had the affectation to leave his laced shirt open at the chest, and untied the ribands of his shoes, according to the custom of the fops of the period in their duels—indicating that they had no intention of leaving the spot.

The signal given, the combatants rushed to the encounter with incredible fury. St. Vidal, who was aged and covered with scars, thought his strength equal to that of former years, because he felt animated by the same courage. For some moments he defended himself with great vigour, and though his hand shook he guided his steel well, waiting for a favourable error in his adversary to pierce him to the heart. But the young and impetuous La Rodde, wearied with the skill

of the châtelain, by a sudden movement, at the risk of receiving his weapon through his body, bounded forward, and with one blow stabbed St. Vidal up to the hilt of his poignard just above his right eye. The redoubted châtelain fell dead upon the spot, and De Chastre at the same instant killed his adversary Rochette.

CHAPTER XIII.

Coubon.—Rocks and Mountains.—Ballads of Clotilde.—Chançons.—Aiguilhe.—St. Michel.—Manners and Customs.—Poets of Auvergne.

We were anxious to see the ruined Château of Bouzols, and the curious basaltic mountain of Coubon crowned with a fantastic-shaped stone at its very summit which has exactly the appearance of a lion *at gaze*. We entered the country of Gévaudan, and accompanied by our host of le Palais Royal ventured into the very heart of the mountains on the road which leads to the mysterious Gaulic town of Monastier. We had a good carriage and a very strong horse whose sure foot we had reason to be thankful for, for the road, though excellent for the first league, was, after we turned off from the *grande route*, little more than a flat rock on which the horse's feet slipped in a fearful manner. So steep was this road in some parts, that it was necessary for our driver to get out, and not only lead the animal care-

fully, but hold him strongly up by main force. Nothing can be conceived more wild and magnificent than this part of Auvergne. Piles of mountains, one range beyond another, varying in form and substance, fill the plains and deep valleys, starting suddenly up from the side of a stream or the midst of a plain. Still as you advance new ranges appear—the glorious peaks of Mazenc above all, with a host of little *mammelons* on all sides, most of them crowned with the ruins of a feudal castle, or with strange black rocks shaped like turrets and battlements.

The Castle of Bouzols itself is very conspicuous; built on the plateau of one of the lowest of the near range and surrounded with gigantic neighbours. Its towers and loop-holes, through which the light gleams, are seen in a moment, as if in a valley; then a sudden descent of the rocky road brings them forward again, as if on one of the highest hills, and anon they stand again on a level. It must have been a place of great strength, and its position, at a time when there were probably no roads at all, must have strangely puzzled the besiegers who sought it amongst these savage and intricate mountains.

At great risk we descended to a village on the Loire, which is here very near its source; and a

singular torrent does the "exulting and abounding river" here appear. Its bed is entirely filled with large masses of rock, between which a silver thread of a stream forces its tortuous way, and only betrays itself by a sudden fall of foam, or a glitter here and there.

We crossed it by means of a movable bridge, carriage and all, and were obliged to return by the same clumsy conveyance, as the road on the opposite side of the river was too rugged and precipitous to attempt. We remained some time, however, in a charming meadow, bordered with trees, from one extremity of which the rocher de Coubon rose in full majesty, with its basaltic *lion* as clearly defined as that above the gates of Northumberland House. Whether this is the celebrated *Bête de Gévaudan,* who once ravaged the country, and engaged the prowess of so many châtelains, does not appear, but I think it very probable to be *no other.*

In such a spot all the wild traditions of the country come fresh upon the memory; the sound of the remarkable and musical *patois* spoken by the peasants revives recollections of the troubadours who brought language from Arabia, India, Spain, Italy, Germany, and whose *words* still remain in the mouths of the people of these mountains on the borders of Languedoc. We heard

our host consign our carriage to the care of a peasant woman in terms like these:—"Garda quest' cavallo e porta esta *in* la routa."

The *patois* of the Gévaudan differs from that of other parts of Auvergne: the popular romance of Clotilde will best give an idea of it.

ROMANCE DE CLOTILDE.

N'erount tres fraïres
N'erount tres fraïres
N'haut qu' une sor à marida
N'haut qu' une sor à marida.

L'haut maridado (bis)
Al pus méchant d'aquel pays.

L'ha tant battudo
Emb' un baston de bert poumia.

Lou san li coula
De la teste jusques ai pes.

Lou li accampoun
Dine une tasse d'agen fi.

Aco 's bilene
Aco 's lou bin que tu biouras.

Sa camisetto
Sembl' à la pél d'un blan moutoun.

N'i baï a l'aïguo
Per sa camisetto laba.

Pendent que l'iéro
N'i beï beni tres cabaliès.

—Hôla sirbanto
Où qu'est la dame du castel ?

—Suis pas sirbanto,
Je suis la dame du castel.

—Ah ! ma surette !
Qu'est qui vous a fait tant de mal ?

—C'est mon chier fraire
Le mari que m'avez baillé.

* * * * *

A donc lou jouine,
N'i galoppe bes lou castel.

De cambr' en cambro
Jusqu' à ce que l'o ajut troubat.

Qu' à cop d'espase
La teste lo ajut coupat.

The following is nearly a literal translation :

CLOTILDE.

In Gévaudan were brothers three,
They had one sister dear ;
The cruel Baron her lord must be,
And the fellest and fiercest knight is he,
In the country far or near.

He beat that lovely lady sore,
With a staff of the apple green,
Till her blood flow'd down on the castle floor,
And from head to foot the crimson gore
On her milk white robe was seen.

He fill'd a cup with her blood so red,
A cup of silver fine;
—"It was for thee this wine was shed,
Come, drink it, Lady mine!"

Her robe was stain'd with the ruby tide
Once pure as the fleece so white;
And she hied her to the river-side
To wash in the waters bright.

While there she stood three knights so gay
Came riding bold and free,
—"Ho! tell us, young serving maiden, pray,
Where yon castle's lady may be?"

—"Alas! no serving-maid am I,
But the lady of yonder castle high!"

—"Oh! sister, sister, truly tell
Who did this wrong to thee?"——

—"Dear brothers, it was the husband fell
To whom you married me."

* * * * *
* * * * *

The brothers spurr'd their steeds in haste
And the castle soon they gain'd,
From chamber to chamber they swiftly pass'd,
Nor paused till they reached the tower at last
Where the felon knight remain'd:

They drew their swords so sharp and bright,
They thought on their sister sweet;
They struck together the felon knight,
And his head roll'd at their feet!

A friend repeated to me two charming ballads picked up in Languedoc, where there is a variety in the *patois*. I cannot resist giving them here, that the reader may compare the difference of dialect. I wrote these down, however, merely by ear, and am not aware that they have ever been printed. The mixture of French, Spanish, and Italian is very curious.

COMPLAINTE.

I.

Deja la né obscurci la naturo
Tout es tranquille e tout cargo lou duol,
Dins lou clocher lou brezargo mormoro,
E lou touquet succedo 'l russinhol.

Del mal hélas! bebi jusqu' a la ligo,
Mun cō suspi sens espor de gari,
Es malhurût, es perdut mun amigo——
Mi cal mouri! mi cal mouri!

II.

Tendro Fêbe precipito ta corso
E disparet que mi fas trop de mal
Di mon espor non es plus lou risourso
Di mon bonhôr non es plus lou signal!
Del mal helas! &c.

CHANSON.

I.

Per aver moun cor ingace
Tu veni sempre in dousous,
Arō que me lasse, bouladge!
Es vengat fritch com un glacou!
Ay! bouladge—bouladge!
Torna me lou! torna me lou!

II.

Un pastor del besinagche
Me cō redilougo beprou,
Am un pou di rabbelage
Lou farō passa per bou:
Ay! bouladge! bouladge!
Torna me lou! torna me lou!

The first of these ditties may be thus rendered:—

DEJA LA NE.

I.

Already sullen night comes sadly on,
And Nature's form is clothed with mournful weeds,
Around the tow'r is heard the breeze's moan,
And to the nightingale the bat succeeds.
Oh, I have drain'd the cup of misery!
My fainting heart has now no hope in store,
Ah, wretched me! what have I but to die?
For I have lost my love for evermore!

II.

Fair tender Phœbe, hasten on thy course,
My woes revive while I behold thee shine,
For of my hope thou art no more the source,
And of my happiness no more the sign!

Oh! I have drain'd the cup of misery,
My fainting heart has now no bliss in store,
Ah, wretched me! what have I but to die?
Since I have lost my love for evermore!

The song of the *Volage* has the following meaning; the *b* and *v* are used indifferently in the *patois* of these mountains, as in Spanish. The idea is amusing of the fair one patching up her heart for a new lover.

LE VOLAGE.

I.

To gain my heart and then deceive
You came with soft beguiling tone,
Now I am left alone to grieve
And you as cold as ice are grown;
Ah, faithless swain! ah, faithless swain!
Return again! return again!

II.

A shepherd since has spoke me fair,
And near my heart, still hov'ring, drew;
If I could mend its rents with care,
With him it yet might pass for new.
Ah, faithless swain! ah, faithless swain!
Return again! return again!

We waited for a tolerably calm day, as storms of wind were very frequent during our stay, to mount the rock of Aiguilhe, and visit the chapel of St. Michel on its summit.

Although it appears rather a tremendous undertaking to look at the height and the perpendicular walls of rock on all sides, we found it comparatively easy and by no means unsafe. A spiral way has been cut in the solid rock of two hundred and eighteen steps, divided by small plateaux, where now exist hollows, which serve merely as resting-places, though they were formerly oratories consecrated, one to St. Raphael, one to St. Gabriel, and one to the holy martyr of Pavia, St. Guignefort.

As we approached nearer the top, at every pause the view became finer, and all the outward beauties of the town of Le Puy appeared to great advantage. The beautiful wood of the *Séminaire* clothing one side; all the spires and towers and buildings, divested of their grim and dirty aspects, and shining in a bright sun against a clear blue sky; all the myriad mountains on every hand, Espaly and its castle rock, the gigantic basaltic mountains near, whose sharp-cut pillars take the form of the sides of a vessel bristling with artillery; Mazenc and its attendant *mammelons*, and the long chain of the Cevennes, as far as sight could stretch,—altogether formed an unequalled prospect, similar alone to that from the *castle-craig* of neighbouring Polignac, which discloses all this, and includes the Aiguilhe itself;

while this rock, not being so lofty, cannot reach Polignac, which is masked by a high intervening mountain.

The charming little miniature chapel of St. Michel is of the oddest form, or rather of no shape at all, being hewn in the rock, and adapting itself to it. It was built in the tenth century, as it now appears, with its long needle-like tower, which, running up to an immense height, makes the rock itself appear to terminate in a sharp point, but originally was a temple of Osiris, or of the sun, and has all the character of an Indian place of worship, as the exquisite arabesques which incrust its chief portal show. The numerous figures, delicate and small, like its structure, are mysterious, and, as they are very perfect, are well worth deciphering. Immediately above the doorway is a bas-relief in stone, representing a human face, round, with rays, above which is an eagle with outspread wings, and on each side a figure; one a female, with a fish's tail, the other defaced, ending in the tail of a serpent.

Above this is an entablature representing a figure seated on a horse, surrounded by smaller figures. Three Moorish arches surround the circular one below, and each of these is filled up by medallioned *histories* in bas-relief; the whole

surrounded by mouldings of the most varied, rich, and beautiful patterns; and, inclosing all, is a wide circular arch, with a *lozenge fret*, which has a Norman character, quite different from the rest. The same style as the latter is observable in the church at Polignac, which looks like a little Norman chapel, placed on the rock amidst Saracenic and Gaulic remains.

The façade is ornamented to the top with Mosaic work in a zigzag pattern; a fine bas-relief in the centre, above the portal, has some resemblance to the form of the sun, and its rays are of richly-carved leaves and flowers. A band of lozenges in relief runs along in a moulding above this, and is surmounted by a row of circular arches, terminating in ornamented pendants, having beneath each a figure clothed in flowing drapery; some of these are crowned. To complete the whole of this elaborate façade, a notched moulding supports the last fillet, and terminates one of the most beautiful specimens of architecture that can be found in any part of France. There is now a single altar in the chapel, which is only decorated when the ceremonies are performed there; it is singular from the concealments behind it, now brought to light, by which it plainly appears that the Pagan priests must have carried on a strange

system of deception by means of their passages in the wall and secret communications. The capitals of the columns are each different, and adorned with emblematical figures. The present flooring is evidently raised, as the bases of most of them are nearly concealed.

On descending the rock, in the slovenly village of Aiguilhe, are seen the remains of a circular temple of Diana, formerly a chapel dedicated to St. Claire; it is now used as a wood-house, and its beautiful architecture is in a sad state of degradation.

In re-entering the town, we passed the church of St. Laurent at the entrance of the boulevard. It has been fine, and the façade still offers some beautiful and interesting details, as does the ornamental screen immediately before the entrance to the aisles. There appears to have been a great many brasses and tombs, now defaced and destroyed. One, however, remains of the great captain, Duguesclin, who desired to be buried at Le Puy, and this is in high preservation. The constable lies in full armour, and the character of his countenance is so peculiar that there can be little doubt of its being a likeness.

Amongst the streets of Le Puy, the old one called Rue Pannessac preserves most of its

original character: all the shops have stone arched fronts without windows; how they manage in winter it is difficult to conceive.

There is a good museum, in which are preserved numerous treasures dug up in the neighbourhood, amongst them the numerous relics of the Gauls are very extraordinary and valuable; those of the Romans are also full of interest; and the few that have been collected of the middle ages are peculiarly so. There are several antique carved chairs, formerly belonging to different castles near, long since despoiled and levelled with the ground; amongst others a superb daïs-seat from the Château de Polignac, of richly carved oak, quite uninjured and of great antiquity. Perhaps beneath its canopy once sat the severe *Grand Justicier* himself.

There are a great many masks of remarkable characters; one of Mary Stuart, said to have been taken by one of her faithful attendants after her death, is very characteristic and fine. There is one of Napoleon, and another which leaves a melancholy impression—the cast taken after death of Sir Walter Scott. All the traces of his last sad illness are but too clearly visible, and it is almost to be regretted, that the world should be allowed to see, be-

hind the curtain so closely, that which can but exhibit the great novelist and poet, in a state of mental decay too painful to contemplate.

The manners of the people of Auvergne are in some respects said to be like those of the Swiss, in the same proportion as their countries assimilate. "La Haute Auvergne," says Brieude, a writer on the subject, "is, properly speaking, a cordon of mountains, which, joining the Velay and the Vivarais, form a prolongation of the Savoyard Alps."

As Auvergne is a country of mountains and valleys, the character of the inhabitants varies with the soil. D'Ormesson says, in his *Memoire sur l'Auvergne*, "The people of La Limagne are laborious but heavy, gross and without industry, so that they seldom derive much profit from their toil, and are, in general, poor. On the contrary, those of the mountains are lively and industrious, and generally subsist by the sale of their cattle and their cheeses, obtaining very sufficient means. This is the usual character of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood of Aurillac: those of St. Flour are less amiable; the peasants of the Mont Dore are gross and very wild and uncultivated; but at Thiers and Ambert,

and the environs, they are soft and sociable, but not distinguished for intellect."

We found these observations, though made some years ago, true on the whole, at least as far as our limited observation went. The peasant of La Limagne is said to be avaricious and addicted to drunkenness; but we never saw any instances of the latter, though the former is disgustingly evident in the slightest transaction with them.

The people do not mind manual labour, but dislike applying themselves to industrious pursuits. Their carts, waggons, and tools are all rude and inconvenient; but they would rather use them as they are than allow their time to be taken up by endeavouring to amend them: this may be said to be generally the case throughout France.

In the mountains are huts called *burons*, which are the same as the *chalets* of Switzerland: here the cheeses are made, which the *buronnier* presses with his knees. These huts are sometimes of stone, and movable, and constructed of wood and turf. They are divided into three chambers; the first is for the fire, the second is for the *vacher's* pails, salt, and necessary implements; in the third his cheese is kept, and here

he sleeps, for the Auvergnats have so great a fear of being robbed, that although they have good watch-dogs, they dare not sleep, except in the midst of their possessions; the beds are boxes filled with straw, placed one above another against the wall, two and two together.

There is generally a little kitchen-garden attached to these *burons*, where the requisite vegetables are cultivated; a stable for horses, and a place for a pig, which is fed with the milk left from the cheeses, and is sold at the famous fairs of St. Luc and St. Martin; besides this, there is an inclosure for the cattle, well covered and strongly barricadoed. In case of the tempests which frequently desolate these regions there is a second inclosure, where the animals are sheltered, and sometimes they are put into the hollows formed by former *burons*, which have been removed, the places of which they are careful not to fill up with earth. It has a curious effect in crossing the mountains, which appear after a storm quite deserted, to see the cattle sometimes suddenly lifting up their horned heads, from a hole in the ground, and looking inquisitively at the traveller: they are usually placed in pairs in this retreat.

In fine weather, about the middle of the day, particularly if the wind is warm, whole droves are

to be seen on the plateaux of the mountains, at the edge of steep descents, and there a forest of horns seems rooted, as, immovable for hours, the animals open their large nostrils to respire the air.

The wolves are their great enemies, and they have diseases peculiar to different districts, which sometimes commit the most fearful ravages, and carry ruin with them in their rapid progress. These maladies appear to be caused by the custom of keeping the cattle for many months in hot ill-ventilated stables, and on the approach of spring exposing them too suddenly to an uncertain and intemperate climate. The instinct of the beasts themselves, to avoid transition, is very curious: they can no longer be kept on the mountains when once the cold winds have set in. A continued bellowing is kept up, and all the echoes are awakened by their clamours for shelter. Dogs and herdsmen are vain; they refuse to be driven back to the heights, and struggle to reach their winter quarters with infinite perseverance. The *buronnier* therefore is obliged to destroy his huts, carry off all his apparatus and all the wood of his dwelling, and descend to the six months' captivity, to which he is generally condemned with his herd.

The *descente des vaches* is a great event in the

country, and the year is divided into two epochs, the ascending and the descending of the cattle. In winter the cows and the family all live together, and go in and out by the same door; the ceiling of the stable or hut is low, in order to be warmer; several divisions of the dwelling are appropriated to the purposes of kitchen and dairy, but the stable is the favourite place of rendezvous.

A circle is formed in the space which occurs at the end of the double ranges of stalls, where the cows remain; here the family and neighbours meet, and sit in winter evenings and tell histories of ghosts, goblins, and fairies to their hearts' content, while the distaff is nimbly plied. If the young girls let their distaff fall, the youths, who watch the opportunity, instantly seize on it, and it is not restored except on conditions insisted on. Great care is, therefore, taken that it should *not* fall, or that it *should*, according to circumstances; and the disputes for and against the prescribed *baiser* cause infinite mirth and amusement.

They are not remarkable, however, for unity in families, and this arises from the love of gain, which has caused these lines to be applicable to them and others:—

Serait-ce un Auvergnat, un Suisse, un bas-Normand,
Qui ne sait de Français que ce mot,—De l'argent !

Although in general healthy, lameness is extremely common amongst the people of Auvergne, as we particularly remarked at Le Puy; otherwise they are strongly built and well-made, but neither sex by any means handsome. The district between Vic and Aurillac is called by Le Grand d'Aussy, " La Circassie et La Géorgie de L'Auvergne;" but we probably did not remain long enough in the country to observe much beauty, or, perhaps, our English notions might have interfered to prevent our admiring the bony sun-burnt beauties we encountered; neither were we sensible of the excellence of the viands, for which Auvergne is said to be celebrated.

The red-legged partridges and wild ducks of Thiers deserve, however, to be named, and the manner in which they are sent up to table also. The cooked bird is placed *on his wings*, which are *displayed* in the dish, forming a curious and picturesque ornament. Of the trout, so much vaunted by a people who know nothing of sea fish, we thought but little, even of the *saumons* of the Loire, which we considered tasteless and dry, though of a beautiful colour. The small

cheeses of St. Nectaire are equal to Stilton, and are a rarity really worth meeting with.

Clermont is famous for its *pâte d'abricot*, and Maurs for its hams; but the latter are so inferior to well-cured English hams that we could not agree in admiring their flavour,

The Auvergnats are fond of good cheer, and have frequent *réunions*, in which they enjoy it. *Goûters de patisserie* are usual amongst young people; they particularly occur on occasion of christenings, when the meetings are called *compérages*. Dinner takes place at noon, and supper at eight o'clock in the evening; the latter meal often lasts all night. This is not unlike the marriage dinners of Brittany, "qui ne finissent jamais!"

Amongst a host of celebrated troubadours who have been distinguished in Auvergne, several sang in Le Velay. Pons de Capdueil stands at their head: he was a brave knight, a *beau parleur*, very gallant, and could play the viol and sing, as well as make poems of great merit and sweetness. Azelais d'Anduze, wife of the lord of Mercœur, inspired his lays: his attachment and his poetry rendered him famous throughout the country. He quitted the scene of his fame for Provence, where for a time he devoted himself to the praise of another beauty. This apparent

neglect so touched Azelais, that when he wished to return to his allegiance she refused his services. He then visited the courts of Marie de Ventadour, the Countess of Montferrand, and that fair coquette the Viscountess d'Aubusson. Azelais was at length softened, and he returned to warble once more at her feet, and never afterwards left her. She died, however, and left him to despair. Many are his *complaintes* on this sad subject: the following will serve as a specimen.

COMPLAINTE.

Of all the wretched, who like me
Has cause to tune a lute to care?
Oh would that death would set me free,
And end at once my long despair!
What hand shall raise my drooping head?
What voice shall to my prayers reply?
Alas! my Azelais is dead—
And I have only now to die!

Oh that on me had fall'n the blow—
That I had first been called away!
Oh would that now some friendly foe
Would stab this heart, to grief a prey!
Forgive me, Heav'n, that I repine,
Forgive each tear in anguish shed,
What now, remorseless Fate, is mine?
Alas! my Azelais is dead.

In the original of the *chançon* which follows, the word *gay* is repeated no less than *twenty-two times.*

CHANÇON.

A happy hope inspires a happy song,
And gaily sweeps my hand the chords along:
My heart is gay, delight is in my eye,
My lute awakes to lively melody.
For her I sing, whose smiles, all love and light,
To blissful thoughts and joyous strains invite:
Gay is her step,—her voice, her glance are gay,
All sadness from her presence flies away;
Gay are her words of playful mirth and youth,
And I am gay with dreams of love and truth.
For, after all the woes my soul has known,
At length I feel her heart is all my own.

Having lost his beloved lady, the disconsolate troubadour, unable to bear the scenes which once delighted him, armed himself, and sought that refuge for the unhappy,—Palestine.

There he remained for many years, and in that distant land composed the story of his life. Under feigned names he recorded the beauties of his mistress and his own misfortunes, relating his early love and happiness, his disappointments and his sorrows, and called his history "Las amors en rabyadas de Andrieu de Fransa."

Pierre, Cardinal of Le Velay, was called the Juvenal of his time and le Roi du Sirvente; his *sirventes* against the clergy are very bitter: he was nevertheless a churchman himself, being a canon of the cathedral of Le Puy. He was the bosom friend of James I. King of Aragon.

One of his poems will show the violence of his style.

PIERRE CARDINAL.

SIRVENTE AGAINST THE CLERGY.

Full of envy, spite, and ill,
Full of pride and malice still;
Who these monks by name would call
Speaks of knaves and robbers all!

They build them houses fair and high,
They plant them groves to please the eye,
But Turk or Persian just as well
Could preach the truth their sermons tell!
They better love to take their ease
Than man to teach, or God to please,
And rather let new sins entice
Than place a bridle on one vice.

They give their souls for gold and gain,
For gold can evil ends attain.
Not for the poor they pile their pelf,
Each labours for his sordid self.
No home with them the wretched share
Their own content their only care.

Brave knights they hate, and ev'ry tongue
Has ready words to do them wrong;
Of noble men this rabble rout
Shame and dishonour spread about.
Better to dare the jaws of death
Than these vile clerks' pestif'rous breath.

Thus goes the world with great and small,
Go, my *sirvente*, and tell it all.

Pierre d'Auvergne was another of the most

celebrated of the poets of his day; the following is like a Persian ghazel.

VERS.

"Go, nightingale, and seek the bowers,
Where she I love in beauty grew,
Tell her what thoughts fill all my hours,
And ask her tender secrets too.
Let her tell thee o'er and o'er
That she never will forget me;
Leave her not, I thee implore!
Till her gentle sighs regret me.

"Then come again as swift as thought,
And all thy zeal to serve me prove,
No news for me with joy is fraught
Like that which speaks of her and love."
Off the rapid gay bird flew,
Bound my lady dear to greet,
Stint or stay he never knew,
And dropp'd my message at her feet.

CHAPTER XIV.

Brioude.—The Condemned Lady of Mauriac.—Nonette.—Usson.—Marguérite de Valois.—Marquis de Canillac.—The Ruse.—The Conquest.—The Castle.—Amethysts.—Ruined Castles.—Coudes.—Pariou.—Facetious Postmen.—An Old Acquaintance.

THE route from Le Puy to Brioude is over wild mountains by an excellent road. The town of Brioude, once an important Roman settlement, is situated in a manner which has caused it to be the prey of every ravaging and pillaging army which has desolated France at different periods. The Saracens, the Normans, the Burgundians,—all in turn have sacked and ruined and taken possession. The turbulent Polignacs made themselves masters of Brioude more than once, and a Seigneur de Castelnau, who was called King of the Companies, besieged it at the head of three thousand men, took the town, and there fortified himself, making it his head-quarters, nor would he agree to evacuate his stronghold, and carry the terror of his name elsewhere, till a hundred thousand florins had been paid him.

The inhabitants and the canons were long at war, and, fatigued with the oppression of the church, the former eagerly adopted the opinions of Luther; violence and destruction followed this change, and ceaseless contentions tore the country to pieces.

So slovenly, dirty, old, and dilapidated are the streets and houses, that it would seem no repairs had ever been attempted there. The antique church of St. Julien is the only thing worth seeing; it is principally of Roman construction, and its portal is very curious in its details.

We passed Lempde, an insignificant town on a height, beyond which are the ruins of the castle of Mauriac, which, our companion in the *coupé*, a gentleman of Le Velay, told us he had lately bought for the sum of sixty francs of a farmer to whom it belonged. The situation is beautiful, and the ruins extremely picturesque: every time stones were wanted in the neighbouring village, a part of the walls was knocked down to furnish them, and in order to preserve them, and enjoy the fine prospect without fear of its chief ornament being destroyed, this lover of the antique had purchased the ground, and there, in summer weather, he and his family, who reside near, repair, and make a little *déjeûner al fresco*, sketch, work, and disport themselves.

He told me that the castle is held in much awe by the peasants in general, though so many have ventured to attempt its demolition. More than one, in confession to the *curé*, has related the sights he saw there, and they have been visible to so many, that no one ventures to doubt the facts.

It seems that on the ruined battlements a lady walks at midnight, who had the misfortune to die without confession; she is condemned to this purgatory for some millions of years; but four times in a year a troop of immortal souls, clothed in transparent and shining garments, descend from Heaven, and are seen pacing the walls in procession. At every one of their visits the doomed lady is remitted a hundred years of her penance; but when the length of time, which she is condemned to wander, is considered, her punishment diminishes but slowly.

We had now quitted the department of Haute Loire, and had re-entered that of the Puy de Dôme.

The country from hence to Issoire is charming. Fine hills rise on all sides, their summits crowned with the ruins of some feudal castle. That of Nonette is very conspicuous; it was formerly considered one of the strongest places in Auvergne, was, however, taken and demolished by Philip

Augustus in 1213, and reconstructed by Jean Duke of Auvergne. Its final destruction took place, like many others, by order of Cardinal Richelieu.

It is a very imposing ruin, and at first I imagined it to be Usson, which I knew we should pass *en route,* as its position is very similar. The mountain on which it stands produces marble, called *pierre de Nonette.*

We had scarcely lost sight of this stupendous castle, which we saw for more than a league, when another became suddenly visible on the opposite side of the road, and was pointed out to us as that for which we were watching with great interest,—the Château d'Usson, with its triple crown, thus described by an old writer: "It is a rock round which are three towns, one above another, forming a papal tiara, and above all is the castle, having a village all round that also." It was considered a place of great strength, and is placed in a most commanding position; the rock on which it stands being isolated, like so many we had seen in Auvergne. As early as the twelfth century it was fortified, and violent struggles were carried on there by the Counts of Auvergne, whose sons sometimes took their titles from it, and were called *Seigneurs du Châtel-Usson.* The English took it in

the fourteenth century. Duguesclin besieged it in vain, and became its master only by negociation.

Charles VI., and his successors inherited the castle, and Louis XI. *le bon et fin renard* as Brantôme calls him, added much to its strength, making it a state-prison, which he considered as stronger and more secure than Loches, Vincennes, or Lusignan.

One of the victims of the caprice and cruelty of this crafty monarch, but who happily baffled his vengeance, was Antoine de Châteauneuf, Seigneur du Lau, sometime Grand Bouteiller de France, Seneschal of Guienne, and high Chamberlain to the king. While in favour, Louis loaded him with riches and honours, and in less than five years had bestowed on him from three to four hundred thousand crowns.

When Châteauneuf fell into disgrace, he was at first confined in the Château of Sully-sur-Loire, but was transferred to that of Usson, as being more secure. The tyrant ordered him to be there placed in an iron cage, of which he seems to have been remarkably fond; but before this sentence was executed the prisoner had the good fortune to escape. When Louis heard of his flight his fury knew no bounds, and, instead of one victim, he sacrificed three to his vindic-

tive rage. The governor of the castle, his son, and the Procureur du Roi, of Usson, were all executed by his command.

When Marguérite de Valois was married to Henry of Navarre, Charles IX. gave her Usson, as part of her dower, and it was here, in after years, that the beautiful, accomplished, and dangerous queen was sent to tedious banishment. To *la belle Marguérite* belong the principal *souvenirs* of Usson; she of whom few princesses have had so much good and ill written,—few, except her ill-fated sister-in-law, Mary Stuart, have had so many enemies and such staunch friends. Scaliger, who was not fond of Henry IV., attributes to her every royal virtue; Brantôme writes of her rather as a lover than an historian; Bayle is very severe respecting her *séjour* at Usson, while Hilarion de Coste describes the place as, "a Tabor for its devotion, a Libanon for its solitude, an Olympus for its taste, a Parnassus for its genius, and a Caucasus for its affliction."

Dupleix, who had been a pensioner of the princess, speaks of her with much candour, for which he is reproached by the Marshal Bassompière, who burnt, when taken to the Bastile as a prisoner, no less than *six thousand* letters which

he had received from the ladies of the court; but Bayle again considers him impartial.

D'Aubigné did not spare her in the Divorce Satirique nor in his History; many others have been extremely harsh towards her; but it must be remembered, that party ran fearfully high at the period, and the greatest part of her historians wrote during her disgrace, when by flattering her they could expect to gain nothing.

After being driven by ill-treatment from castle to castle by her unnatural brother, Henri III., Marguérite was finally pursued and taken, and carried prisoner to Usson, where she was given in charge to the Marquis de Canillac, governor of the province. The princess was then but thirty-five, in the full possession of all her attractions, and Canillac soon found himself the slave of his fair captive; he had resolved to treat her with becoming severity, but the mere sight of her *white arm* rendered him powerless, and for the future he existed only to please the bewitching queen.

Marguérite was not slow to take advantage of the conquest she had made, and used every art to become mistress of the castle. She has been reproached for the part she played in this business; but at a period when murder and treachery

of the worst description were the weapons used on all occasions, a little *finesse* and coquetry to gain her ends, may surely be pardoned an oppressed princess.

It appears that, importuned by the passion of her jailor, and finding that she was entirely in his power, she resolved on a stratagem to turn the tables. She feigned great affection for his lady, and thus prevented her suspecting her husband's devotion to herself; at the same time she allowed Canillac to imagine that she might be induced to listen to his suit, but, for both their sakes, recommended his absence, requesting him to accept, as a proof of her esteem, her house in Paris, the Hôtel de Navarre, and an estate, worth two thousand *livres de rente*, situated near Senlis. To confirm this gift, she drew out a paper in form, which was addressed to M. Hennequin, president of parliament; but the wily coquette took care to send to that lawyer another paper, with private instructions, not to attend to any other that might be presented. It is said that having accomplished his absence, she took possession of all the jewels of the marquise, and, declaring herself sole mistress of Usson, sent her away with all her people.

The marquis, on arriving at Paris, found himself a dupe, and, besides, the laughing-stock

of both Navarre and the King, who amused the whole court with jests upon the occasion. Meantime Marguérite sent in all speed to Orleans for troops, and garrisoned her castle so strongly that she soon found herself absolute possessor.

It was then, feeling secure, that she gave herself up to the pleasures of literature and the arts: her enemies indulge in the bitterest sarcasms, and hesitate at nothing vile in describing the life she led on the summit of the rock; giving lists of imaginary lovers, and turning her *protégés* of genius into adoring and favoured swains. Dupleix, the flatterer of Cardinal Richelieu, probably a discarded favourite, is spiteful in the extreme, in his reports of her *ménage*, but, by asserting too much, his testimony becomes suspected.

Jean Darnalt, again, knows not how enough to laud the sanctity of her life, which, as there is no doubt she was fond of amusement and luxury, she most likely as little deserved as the abuse of the others.

She was liberal to prodigality, and very imprudent, like her mother Catherine, in her expenses. She gave with both hands, and forgot that her means were limited. Her charity was great, though she might not be judicious in its distribution, and she soon found that, owing to

the unjust detention of her revenues by her brother, and the unfair distribution of her mother's property, she was reduced to great necessity, and obliged to pawn her jewels to the Venetians, and melt down her gold and silver plate. "Nothing was left her, in fact," says De Coste, "but the liberty of the air she breathed — she had reason to hope little and fear all—for everything was in confusion around her."

She saw, with grief, from the high terrace of her fortress, her friends cut to pieces in the plain below, and civil war and all its horrors at her feet. Her people sometimes sallied forth and joined one or the other party, and on one occasion Durfé, the author of Astrea, was made prisoner and brought to Usson. Of course, as she received the poet with courtesy and kindness, his adventures in her castle are not allowed to pass without scandalous comment. He himself has recounted a passage in his romance, alluding to Marguérite, under the name of Galatea.

She lived for some time in continual terror of being poisoned by the emissaries of her brother, and never dared to eat till her dishes had been tasted by those about her.

When Henry IV. became king, and thought of taking another wife, she violently opposed his imprudent project of marriage with Gabrielle d'Estrées, but when it was proposed that he should be united to Marie de' Medici, she not only gave her consent, but accompanied it with a very respectful letter to the husband from whom she separated: this letter Henry could not read without tears. It is to Henry's credit that he immediately paid her debts, and declared her at liberty to remain at Usson, or to choose any town she pleased in France in which to reside; but she did not avail herself of this permission till after six years, when, having passed twenty on this spot, she left it to go to Paris.

The rock on which the castle is built is volcanic, like most of those in Auvergne; and there is no spring on its surface. The inhabitants of the town were therefore obliged to carry all the water required at the castle in vessels, which they bore on their heads up the precipitous ascent.

Close to Usson is the village of Vernet, famous for the amethysts produced in the neighbouring mines, which were formerly worked by the Spaniards, who came in great numbers, and

made ample provision of these gems. In the environs of Issoire and Brioude there are several other mines of amethyst to be found.

Issoire is a clean, neat little town, with a fine mosaic-covered church. There is a popular saying: —

> Il ne faut pas sortir d'Issoire
> Pour moudre, ni pour cuire, ni belles filles voir,
> Et pour de l'excellent vin boire:

whether the town deserves this commendation we could not judge. From the *salle à manger* of our hotel we caught our first glimpse of the Monts Dores shining in a brilliant sunset, and appearing so distinct as to seem quite close. We looked at them with delight, as we meditated passing some time in their wild recesses, and hastened on with fresh spirits, hoping that the temporary fine weather would not too soon evaporate.

The country is exceedingly striking between Issoire and Coudes; nothing can be richer, more varied, smiling, and unexpected than its beauties. So many mountains rise from the luxuriant valleys crowned with imposing ruins, so many forests of bright trees and such brilliant meadows are there along the route, that we enjoyed our drive extremely, and were never weary of gazing out at the splendid views before us, much to the

surprise of a very sulky driver, who, at length, finding us bent on teazing him for information respecting a road he had travelled a hundred times without looking to the right or the left, at length roused himself, and told us the names of the ruined castles and crowned peaks, adding, however, his opinion that the English were *unique*. We began to recognize in his disagreeable manner our neighbourhood to Clermont, and to recollect how little we liked the style of the people before; discontent and ill-humour seem here to prevail, and as this was perceptible at the time we were there, no doubt the burst of rebellion, which took place in less than a month after, was then preparing.

But we thought little of our *conducteur* as we passed through this lovely country and looked from height to height, which "of many a foeman told." Here the ruffian Merle and his lawless followers scoured the country, and advanced upon devoted Issoire, which he took and burnt, and massacred the inhabitants.

Here Mont Pariou and its magnificent tower, as large as, and resembling, that of Coucy, rose grand and commanding, looking defiance to its neighbours; there the ruins of Vic le Comte scowled from the lofty summit of another rock,

while ravines between parted the hostile châteaux, once always ready to begin or sustain an attack. The beautiful sparkling Allier runs through a rugged bed, and makes a hundred winds amidst the valleys and meads which spread their enamelled bosoms to receive it.

The entrance to Clermont from this side is very grand, and we were more pleased with the general aspect of the town than on first seeing it, but until a little more order and neatness are established it can never deserve to be ranked as one of the first towns in France. We found at the Post-office so many letters and newspapers that the clerk who handed them to us, could not contain his risibility—"il y a de quoi vous amuser pour quelques jours, Mesdames"—was his exclamation in delivering them. As postmen are not often, in our own country, moved to make a remark, the numerous jests which our somewhat voluminous correspondence occasioned in most of the towns where we stopped, entertained us as much as the circumstance seemed to do them.

We stayed at Clermont only long enough to afford the inquisitive post officials more food for conversation by answering our letters, and then prepared to take our way to the village of Mont Dore les Bains. We chose *la petite route* to go

by, proposing to return by *la grande*, and our places were secured in the *coüpé* of a *diligence* which left Clermont at six in the morning.

We found that the season at Les Bains, usually so brilliant, had entirely failed this year, owing to the continued rains, and, when we entered the coach, were not surprised to find that we were the sole passengers. Our driver was one of the wildest, strangest-looking men we had ever beheld, a mere mountaineer, but surly and with a somewhat sinister expression of countenance, which, if we had known the character of the master of the vehicle we travelled by, might have disturbed our tranquillity; but it was not till afterwards that we found he and his men were looked upon with suspicion, and were considered a set of adventurers who had started in opposition to the regular conveyance, choosing the *petite route*, because it is several leagues nearer; and, nevertheless, except a bargain is made beforehand, charging much dearer than the accredited drivers.

We reached the stormy foot of the Puy de Dôme, at which point the roads to Les Monts Dores turn off. A furious wind, as bleak as December, was raging, and nothing could look more cheerless and awfully chilling than the mountain. We saw and recognised our old

friend, the guide, who eagerly ran forward to talk to us while we stopped at La Baraque. Our driver surlily asked her if she knew us, and she replied scornfully, "Certainly, I know many English ladies—why not? and these are old friends." We were amused at the time, but were perhaps more indebted to her recognition than we suspected, as it proved to our ill-conditioned companion that we were not strangers in this part of the world; and this trifle might have determined him to carry us and our goods safe to our destination.

Heavy clouds were gathering over the great giant's brow; and as we passed Montrodeix, his opposite neighbour, the ruined castle on its summit came out black in the lurid light which was spreading round. We were obliged to close all the windows, and wrap ourselves up in shawls, for it seemed as if, in a moment, we had passed from summer to the depth of winter. The wind howled, and shook the *diligence* as it dashed along, and there was every token of a coming storm. The Puy Noir and the Puy de la Vache and de Lassalas, dark and stormy, looked nearly of the height of the great Puy, for now the whole of its summit was enveloped in a thick mist, and the giants round were permitted to appear of their full

size. On we went by a tolerable road through the rugged village of Laschamps. I asked the driver if we had reached this place, and he expressed his surprise at our being *au fait* of the route, in a manner not very conciliating. Wilder and wilder became the way, and countless became the volcanic hills; blacker and blacker grew the ashy dust which we scattered as we drove on. At last, a series of red peaks of remarkable form announced Randanne, and there we paused to breakfast, and to see the wonders of M. Montlosier's chapel tomb.

CHAPTER XV.

Randanne.—The Count.—The Tomb and the People.—Inn at Montchaud.—The Déjeûner—The Storm-birds.—Tempest Fiend.—Arrival at the Village des Bains.

THE Count de Montlosier, who created a paradise in the wild, has not been long dead; his memory is revered and beloved, and the simple peasantry, to whom he was a benefactor, are unable to comprehend why he was denied Christian burial, or why at his death the bishop refused to afford him the last offices. "On dit qu'il a écrit quelques livres qui déplaisent à Monseigneur, le pauvre excellent homme!" said the young woman who conducted us to his tomb, which was erected in his lifetime, and placed in a charming rural situation, overlooking part of the valley and close to a pretty tangled wood.

When, after a long exile, this Man of Ross returned to his paternal estate, he found a hut in the midst of barren hills and arid plains, the peasantry in the lowest depths of ignorance and

poverty, and everything gloomy and unpromising. But, with all the resolution of benevolence, he set about a *reform in nature*, and in the course of a few years corn, wine, fruit and flowers sprang up wherever his magic foot had trod. He established himself in this most savage region, devoting all the energies of his mind and body to ameliorate the condition of the poor, and create for them another country. At the commencement of his herculean task it is related that a traveller on horseback, passing by while he was engaged with his labourers in clearing a field which he proposed cultivating, looked at him with surprise, and remarked, "I admire your perseverance; no doubt your intention is to procure in these parts heath as high as forest trees." If the same traveller were to pass that way now, he would find the jest turned on him, for all is cultivation and riches.

The son of this estimable man and learned writer has few of his father's good qualities; he appears to be an exquisite of the modern French school, and neglects all that it has taken years to produce. We saw him dismount from a *diligence* which passed the little road-side inn at the foot of Montchaud, where our horses were resting, and remarked his discontented expression of countenance, and an

air of pride which the people in this hamlet have been little accustomed to from one of his name. All the old hospitality of the château has ceased, no travellers or visitors are there, and the young heir only passes the shooting season in the mountains, living the rest of the year at Clermont and at Paris, occupying himself but little with the people, the cherished children of his philosophic father's adoption.

We were caught in a heavy shower while standing at the tomb, and had to take shelter under its pretty modern-Gothic portico, with our young guide and her baby. She, and her husband and family, now keeping the inn at Randanne, had all been servants in the old count's house, and the politeness and agreeable manner of their address formed a striking contrast with those of the coarse peasants round about Clermont, and proved the advantage of association with a superior mind, and judicious instruction.

Respectful yet dignified, cheerful, obliging, and kind, yet with proper humility, this party, young and old, women and men, were admirable specimens of the good effected by their late lord, the object of their praise and affection, their master, friend, and father, whose loss at the age of eighty they cannot sufficiently regret.

Sheltered by umbrellas, which our attentive hosts sent after us, we got back to our cottage inn, where we had leisure for our exceedingly good breakfast, made up of numerous delicacies, such as Clermont had never afforded us; game, preserves, cream, fruit, and wine, good and in abundance.

While we were occupied examining a pile of specimens of the volcanic rocks around, collected by the *geological waiter*, and watching the rain, which now descended in torrents, while loud peals of thunder echoed along the mist-covered mountains, a large party of travellers arrived, and began to clamour for refreshments. As the appearance of the hostelry was not promising exteriorly, the entrance being through a kitchen, the staircase a mere ladder, and the *salle à manger*, though clean, primitive in the extreme, this gay company, evidently in search of amusement, and coming from some distant part of France,—some of them from Paris itself,—were not much impressed with the appearance of things in general, and loud and vociferous were their regrets at having been forced by the weather to seek the shelter of *ce vilain cabaret!* It was comic to remark the gradual change in their demeanour, as the quick and polished waiter, formerly a valet of M. le Comte, placed the dishes on their table, unmoved by their jokes

and contemptuous questions depreciating the fare set before them. The soup caused a pause in their jeering, the *rôti* another; the game elicited a burst of satisfaction; the *fricassée de poulet* and *omelette* more still, and the first, second, and third bottle of wine caused a round of applause. Being thus propitiated they were fairly put into good-humour, dish after dish was brought them, and to each due honour done, new commendations bestowed, new amazement expressed. "Bon Dieu, c'est incroyable! c'est unique! un tel déjeûner de montagne! A Paris on n'aurait rien trouvé de mieux!"

With such exclamations did they fill up the intervals of eating; for more than two hours were we forced to be witnesses of their satisfaction, for the storm without continued unabated, and we could not venture forth; and we had thus an opportunity of drawing the conclusion that when Frenchmen have a good repast before them they far exceed the English in their capability of devouring.

"Ah, mon vieux, je ne fais que commencer!" said one of these insatiables to his almost exhausted friend, after an incredible quantity of viands had disappeared, helping himself to some *compôte de cérises* and biscuits, and filling a glass of *eau-de-vie, en attendant* the *café*, for which

he confessed he could not wait with patience; though when it came they found it so excellent that they ordered "*encore pour douze*," much to the entertainment of the waiter, whose risibility was now fairly excited.

Hopeless of release, for our driver was probably enjoying an equally good breakfast below, and seemed to have forgotten that horses or passengers existed, we stood at the little casement gazing into the court and waiting for a gleam of sunshine. The rain ceased by degrees, and presently a gentle twittering was heard; the bright leaves shook as if throwing off the heavy drops; and we beheld, running swiftly about amongst the stones and grass, a pair of the most beautiful little fairy birds that ever sprang forth after a storm to promise fair. They were yellow, slightly shaded with a deeper hue; the male had two long white feathers, which adorned his tail; their shape and movements were peculiarly graceful and elegant, as they rapidly flitted along pecking beside the pools.

We asked what they were called in the country, but exclamations of surprise were all we heard in reply, as they seemed strangers, quite unknown. Our hungry friends now started up, and the humorist of the party professed his intention of changing the scene,—

"Maintenant allons admirer les beautés de la nature," cried he, as they all sallied forth in the mud and wet, to seek the tomb amongst the hills.

Our patience being now quite exhausted, we began to represent the necessity of continuing our route, if Le Mont Dore was to be reached before night. Rather unwillingly our driver brought forth his horses, and, after as much delay as possible, we were again *en route.*

But our pretty messengers were storm birds, and we soon found we were wrong in imagining their presence betokened fine weather; for the mist thickened, the rain became more steady and increased in violence, the winds howled more fiercely, and all nature wore a gloomy aspect.

Still, as we hurried on, more solitary, more dismal, more precipitous, and more savage grew the road, if that could be called a road which seemed a chasm in the rocks worn by the torrents.

We had taken up one passenger, a man and his dog, and had rejected some others at the wretched *cabaret aux cabanes* before the rain came on so furiously; the latter had bargained too closely for their journey, but were obliged soon after to follow the *diligence,* with loud cries and entreaties to be taken up, as their proposed

walk to Les Bains began to appear an impossible feat. Giving them as long a run as he could, our driver at length stopped and took them in, making a merit to us of having told them the *coupé* was taken.

Lake Aydat and its beautiful banks were veiled in mist, the host of volcanoes of Montchaud, the rock of Dupin and of Chateaubriand, the Vache and Lassollas we left behind, and dashed forward on our stony way,—rain beating, sleet driving, thunder rolling and echoing, wind roaring, and the Tempest Fiend in full career!

We reached the elevated plateau of Baladaud, still pelted by the anger of the elements: the boisterous songs of our companions behind had subsided to calm; we sat almost breathless while our lumbering vehicle rattled along the hardened lava which formed our road, and vainly endeavoured to descry through the dense fog the magnificent prospect seen from this spot, fourteen hundred *mètres* above the level of the sea.

Nothing but clouds and vapour were around us, and we could only tell that we were descending by the fearful jolting which threatened to annihilate our carriage at every bound. At last, as we expected, a spring gave way and all was confusion. We were just then exposed to all the fury of the blast, which the surrounding

hills hitherto had broken in a degree, and for the half hour we stopped to rectify the damage it is difficult to conceive a more desolate situation.

On, however, we jolted, and presently we reached the long pine wood of La Chaneau, and from thence, past cataracts, which we heard but could not see, and by many turns in the rocky road we at last found ourselves on the level, in the valley of the Dordogne.

The storm now seemed resolved to give us a *coup de grace*; and as we drove helter-skelter into the *village des bains* the rain poured down in torrents; we were, on our stoppage in a large square, instantly surrounded by a clamorous gang of *commissionaires* ready to pounce upon us and carry us off to their boarding-houses. We resolutely kept our seats till we discovered the *bonne* of the house recommended to us by M. Lecoq, to whose care we abandoned ourselves, and, after wading through a lake of water, we were at length safely housed and sitting in a neat little chamber by a blazing wood fire, with a dinner bell ringing merrily, whose summons had been reserved till the arrival of the *diligences* of *la grande* and *petite route*.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Monts Dores.—The Cascades.—Eagle.—Scieries de Bozat.—The Sisters of the Mills.—The Bijoux in the Boxes.—Madame Laffarge.—Effects of eighteen months' excursion.—Murol.—St. Nectaire.—Magdeleine.—The Good Bishop.

SITUATED in the centre of France, in the south-west part of the department of the Puy de Dôme, rise the group of volcanic mountains, 1887 *mètres* high, called Les Monts Dores, from a valley where the Dordogne has its source. The hot springs for which it is celebrated were well known to the Romans, as the numerous vestiges of temples and other buildings plainly testify. The principal spring is still covered with its original Roman roof, and many of the other baths have been discovered which were used at the period when the fashionable invalids of the imperial sway resorted to the healing valley.

As usual in every part of France, there is some elegance and more slovenliness in the houses and streets; but the baths are admirable,

conducted by men of learning and science, and attended with the utmost care and propriety. With them, however, we had nothing to do, and were quite content with half an hour's steaming and stifling as we went over the different departments, accompanied by a zealous explainer.

The morning after our arrival had risen beautifully, and all trace of the storm had passed away. The grand cascade rushed over its perpendicular rock, as if close to the village, the rugged Pic de Sancy gleamed white in the sun, the dome of the mysterious-looking Capucin rose round and glowing above the pine forests opposite, and its detached prism, which exactly resembles a gigantic monk, clothed in his robe and cowl, apparently descending the mountain, was clearly visible.

Impatient to see all the singular beauties of the valley, but bewildered by the difficulty of finding a practicable path for two steps out of the village, except on the high road, we lost no time in securing a guide, who we imagined would lead us, by some easy path, up the mountains. On the contrary, his amazement was extreme when we proposed walking at all — it was, he assured us, impossible for females; not a foot



Thomas Hilder, Delin.

Green & Broadwindle Street.

THE VALLEY OF THE MONTS DORES.

London. Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street. 1841.

of ground was even, not a path but was the bed of a torrent, down which the myriad streams ran gurgling amongst the stones, and allowed no way for foot-passengers. We soon found that we must submit to the usual plan, adopted at the baths, of being carried in chairs, or mounting horses. We preferred the latter, and our adventures began.

Our first expedition was to the cascades of Queureilh and La Vernière, the plateau du Rigolet, and Les Scieries, the Capucin, and the pine forests.

The first of the numerous cascades we met with, now seen in great perfection from the fulness of the water swelled by the rains, was a charming little fall, called Du Rossignolet, which we had passed on our way from Clermont, but had been unable to see for the mists. The verdure was emerald green, the trees and shrubs were bright and fresh, the waters sparkling in a warm and brilliant sun, and the face of nature so changed from the day before that we could hardly believe we were traversing the same route as at setting out. This pretty, little, noisy waterfall, foaming over a bed of rocks, detained us some time to admire its charming situation, but every new site we reached our admiration be-

came greater, for nothing can exceed the wild beauty of the scenery in every direction on these mountains.

From the height of the Puy du Barbier a stream descends, which leaps over a ledge of basaltic rocks, from an elevation of about sixty feet, and forms the Cascade de Queureilh. A turfy lawn spreads before it, and large pine trees throw their shadows over the ravine. A more secluded or rural spot cannot be desired, except it is that where the broader and more important fall of La Vernière invites the stranger to repose and dream away hours, listening to its incessant roar, as it throws its three streams over the scalloped rocks through which they have worn their way amongst the woods of pine and beech which surround it.

From height to height, as you mount the steep ascent of the forests, you arrive at verdant plateaux, where cattle are feeding; to these the little-fanciful and *very French* name of *Salons* is given, but, perhaps, they deserve it, for here in the height of the season gay parties of the bathers and water-drinkers resort, and *fêtes champêtres* are given, accompanied by plenty of gambling. Fortunately, we were here at the end of a very bad season, when few visitors were to be seen, consequently we were not disturbed with any scene

of revel, or the appearance of the remains of such. All was as wild and silent, and sad and grand, as if a Parisian dandy, a Russian prince, or a Lyonnese merchant had never rattled the dice or made the echoes start with the popping of Champagne corks, and the clatter of dishes and plates. Nevertheless of all places under the sun, it must be confessed that the plateaux of the Monts Dores are the most delightful spots for a pic-nic party, sentimentally inclined, and really feeling the beauties and glories of the nature which surrounds them. If poets, painters, and philosophers, the young and simple-hearted, the fair and the gentle, could make up the party, excluding the worldling, the noisy jester, the profane scorner of rural beauty and grace, the gambler, and the gourmand — a *partie* to the Salon de Mirabeau would be, indeed, exquisite. Music, but only the melody of untaught sweetness—Irish, Scotch, Welsh, and other mountain airs must be there heard—no studied, learned, pretending compositions of no meaning, intoned by ambitious aspirants for applause, expressing nothing and awaking no sympathies;—all must be wild and strange, and romantic and peaceful as the scene, and then—

> "If there be an Elysium on earth
> It is this—it is this."

We heard the eagle scream, and saw its broad wings expand above the tops of the pines; we sat beneath the gigantic trees clothed with their peculiar drapery of pale green lichen, and gazed at the fantastic rocks, whose masses raised their pyramids in the dark alleys down which the sunbeams struggled.

The strange dome of the Capucin came out from its fringe of lofty firs, and from the spot where we saw it the enormous detached block wore the exact aspect of a friar wrapped in his religious dress. So startling is this appearance, that as you gaze it is impossible not to imagine the figure moves, and you almost expect to see it descend the steep path beneath its feet, and wind along the grove to the open plain.

We rested our horses at the cottage of the sawing-mills, Les Scieries de Bozat, where an impetuous stream turns several. Here we saw a curious and interesting scene; two young girls both under twenty, welcomed us and our guides to their house, where they are in the habit of providing refreshments to travellers. One of them was as beautiful as a painter could have wished; she wore a high-crowned, white, neatly plaited cap, bound with a broad scarlet and white chequered ribbon; her features were delicate and finely cut, and her rounded cheek was all lilies

and roses, while her fine dark eyes sparkled with animation, yet had a shy glance like an antelope's.

A bright red handkerchief sat close to her elegant shape, and showed her slight waist; round her throat was a black riband tied in a bow in front. She wore a dark red petticoat tucked up, and displaying an under one striped. Her stockings were blue, and her pretty little feet had new smart black *sabots*. This charming figure so dressed, for it was a fête day, ushered us into the cottage, where her sister, a girl a few years older, and only less pretty than herself, from looking rather sickly and delicate, made us welcome. While we were talking we suddenly heard behind us a sort of chirping, which immediately engaged the attention of our hostesses, who approached a sort of dresser, on which stood two boxes. "Are those your chickens?" I asked, amused at their hurrying at once to the spot. "Ah, mon dieu! non, Madame — ça sont nos enfans," was the reply.

We approached the little caskets, in which these treasures lay, and were then shown a baby in each, the property of the sisters, who were both married though so young. Never were seen two such *bijoux*, so neat, so clean, so handsome, as the infants curled up in these wooden boxes, with rockers, and covered with clean

blankets. One was only two, the other four months old. Their dresses were unique, their head-gear being arranged very like their mothers', bound with a broad bright-coloured riband, and with bows of riband at their tiny wrists. The father of one of them entered at this moment, a remarkably handsome young man, with very civilised manners, and speaking passable French. The interest we took in the children appeared to delight all parties, and our commendations of their beauty were received with evident satisfaction. They told us that in winter they were generally prevented from going far from their mills by the snow, and it was rare that they could get to mass on Sundays, as there was no church nearer than Mont Dore, from which they were several leagues. They seemed well off, and appeared to have everything necessary for their *ménage;* their house and court, and all around them was singularly clean and neat, and certainly never was a prettier family altogether; we regretted not having seen the other husband whom our guides described as equally young and good-looking.

We had been all day in the mountains, jolted on our rough but sure-footed steeds, and we were not sorry to join the dinner party at the table-d'hôte. The young advocate of Ma-

dame Laffarge, whose devotion to her interests and conviction of her innocence has made him so conspicuous, was staying in our hotel; he is a remarkably gentlemanlike, agreeable, and very handsome man, of unaffected polished manners, and full of taste and enthusiasm. It appears that on his way from Limoges to Le Mont Dore, in passing through Clermont, his first care had been to purchase some *pâte d'abricot*, for which the town is famous, and despatch it forthwith to the interesting prisoner confined for her husband's murder. "Cette pauvre chère! —elle ne mange rien que ça!" said he, with deep emotion. He is perfectly convinced of her innocence, as indeed most people now are, seeing that Laffarge was evidently *not poisoned at all.* Her fate is certainly hard; if she is guilty, as her sentence has made her, and condemned to hard labour, what is the meaning of her living in comparative luxury in her seclusion? If her judges, indulgent so far, and unjustly so, having pronounced her a murderess, believe in her innocence, why is she kept in durance and the world deceived in every way. That she has faults, vices, and an ill-regulated mind, her own memoirs prove, and it is probable that she is guilty of the jewel robbery; but that has nothing to do with the question of the

murder, and her case has had a disgraceful finale for French law. "If you saw her you could not for an instant credit her enemies!" exclaimed her adorer, who is quite *épris*, and his *belle passion* is exactly what suits the taste of la jeune France:—to adore a supposed murderess who has been dragged before a tribunal, accompanied by such peculiar details! what a charming subject for a tragedy by Victor Hugo!—the *dissecting scene* would tell well on the French stage, and he would write a long preface to prove that it is neither revolting nor disgusting, as he usually does to each of his plays. Certain it appears that the young advocate may say with Ruy Blaz, he dares to defend her:

> "Parceque rien n'effraie une ardeur si profonde,
> Et que pour vous sauver je sauverais le monde!
> Je suis un malheureux qui vous aime d'amour!
> Helas!"

The contrast of manners between this enthusiastic and well-dressed gentleman and all the other Messieurs at table was striking, each keeping on his hat or cap in true Yankee fashion, a style much admired in France at this moment.

My friend and I hazarded a remark to each other in English, deprecatory of the custom, which we were not altogether sorry to find one

person at the table had understood: he came round afterwards and addressed us in such strange English that we concluded he was one of the Russian visitors we had heard were at Le Mont Dore; but he announced himself as an Irishman, and excused his bad accent by the fact that he had been travelling in the Pyrenees for *eighteen months*, and, not having spoken English all that time, had nearly forgotten his native tongue.

Every day during our stay, for the weather was fortunately propitious, although it had rained till now, almost incessantly throughout the summer, we made a new excursion mounted on our "high trotting horses."

There is no end to the beauty and variety of these rides, and a whole season might well be passed in enjoyment in these mountain solitudes.

The route to the stupendous Château de Murol is strangely wild and curious, across a chain of mountains of all heights and sizes. The first remarkable one, *en route*, is that of Diane, or Dienne, a small Puy, covered with a fine turf, the form of which is peculiarly regular and a perfect dome, looking like a bubble of earth suddenly hardened to a rock. Along vast *plateaux* of basalt the road winds till it reaches the valley of Chambon, and the red rock of Tartaret.

Above the village and the pretty lake of

Chambon, rises the pointed rock called Le Dent du Marais, between which and Tartaret runs a lovely valley and a beech wood, through which is seen sparkling the silver waters of the river Couze. A wooded island seems to float in the middle of the peaceful lake, and is worthy to be the habitation of the fairies, once the sole denizens of the Monts Dores.

The much disputed site of the country-residence of Sidonius Apollinaris is fixed by some on the banks of the lake of Chambon; and the ruins of the Château de Varennes, where we sat to enjoy the landscape, are supposed to occupy the position of this dwelling which he so eloquently describes.

Nothing can exceed the grandeur of the woods of Murol, which extend from this point, and surround the village, which at a distance is remarkably picturesque.

The antique château stands in a most commanding situation; it is completely isolated, being built on the summit of a mountain crowned with a basaltic rock in which the walls are constructed. Its strength must, therefore, have been immense. An enormous tower of peculiar form is conspicuous amidst the gigantic ruins, and commands the whole country for leagues round. From the top of this tower, where we

had not the courage to climb, so dangerous is the ascent and so fearful the yawning chasms below, a magnificent view is obtained of the wide plains of lava, and the effects of the volcanic fire vomited from Le Puy du Tartaret. From a high window in the castle we saw enough to amaze us of the singular country spread round this stupendous fortress. Every Puy looked as if ready to send forth its ancient flames, and the chaos of confused mounts and piled-up rocks seemed to know no end.

The wonderful Gorge de Chaudefour, with its valley of long pointed rocks, sending up their ragged spires in rows between the extinct volcanoes, whose open craters yawn around in a circle; parts of La Limagne and its peaceful plains in the extreme distance, and dark forests of everlasting beeches near;—all together fill the mind with rapt astonishment.

The castle was built early in the thirteenth century, and was the abode of some of the powerful chiefs, little better than brigands, who laid the country under contribution. The name of Robert Chambre, its earliest lord, might lead one to imagine him an Englishman, which it is probable enough he was. No doubt many has been the siege sustained by these walls and towers, which look as if they could have

once defied an army. It belongs now to the family of Chabrol, and is kept up with care, although it is less interesting than many we had seen, having no history or legend that we could hear attached to it. The following, however, is a legend of Mont Cornadore, its neighbour, which may suffice for the barrenness of Murol.

THE LITTLE VEDELET OF MONT CORNADORE.

Petit Jean le Vedelet* was very young when he first went to keep the calves on Mont Cornadore. His mother was a widow with three children, of whom he was the eldest of the two sons, and his sister was a year older than himself.

All the summer he was employed by the *vacher*, and never descended from the mountains except on some extraordinary occasion, once, perhaps, during the season.

His occupation was to take care of the young calves, to offer them his finger to suck, which he dipped in water, that they might thus be induced to drink, and at stated hours he gave them salt, which they licked.

He never allowed them to stray out of his sight, tended and cherished, and was beloved by them in an extraordinary degree. They were

* The Vedelet is the calf-tender.

always licking him with their tender tongues, and followed him with their large eyes wherever he moved; he had only to point, and they obeyed him, and his slightest word could recal them from any part of the mountain where they loved to wander together. The *vacher* said that he had never had so obedient a boy as Jean under his control, and he had no reason to complain of his lot, for he was well fed and led a quiet pleasant life in the hills and amongst the valleys, having nothing to do with the larger animals, which were under the direction of others.

Though he was sorry when the summer was over, because he could no longer enjoy the fresh air or sit beside the pleasant streams, yet he was glad to return to his mother's cottage, or to see her and his sister and brother join the circle round the fire in his master's stable on winter nights.

Those nights were very pleasant; he was not separated from his bleating herd, of whom he was very fond, for his station in the circle was close to where they stood in their stalls, while all round the cows and bulls and *tourillons* were ranged at their ease. It was beautiful to his eye to look at these fine animals, with their cream-colour bodies, marked with large

brown or black spots, and the perfume of their breath embalmed the air around.

His master was a rich proprietor, whose family was large; and as he was very kind and of a cheerful disposition, he loved to see his neighbours about him at the time of *fêtes* and rejoicings. On these occasions, a number of young girls used to come to see his eldest daughter, Perrette, of whom the chief favourite was Jean's sister, Jeanneton; these two always sat together, and went on with their spinning merrily, listening to the stories which were told by the elder people of ghosts and fairies and strange wonders that had happened in the mountains.

One Christmas night, as they were all sitting very comfortably talking and laughing, they were startled by a low growl, which seemed very near the door of the *vacherie*, and they were not long in discovering it to be that of a wolf. This was no unusual sound, but it appeared rather nearer than they were accustomed to hear it; and the probability of others being in the neighbourhood, caused the whole party to be on the alert. Presently, a tapping was heard at the door, and a voice without entreated admission.

Several of the assembly started up to undo the door, as hospitality was never refused under

such circumstances; and it was Jean who ushered in a man dripping with wet and covered with snow. He seemed much exhausted, and was almost speechless from cold and fatigue; however, wine and food were given him, and in a short time he revived.

He told them he was a minstrel travelling the country, had crossed the mountains from Le Velay, and was journeying on to Clermont: he had lost his way, and been pursued by wolves, and was glad enough of the shelter he found amongst them.

He seemed about eight-and-twenty, was tall and strongly built, and had a remarkably handsome countenance and bright flashing eyes. He was extremely agreeable, told story after story, and sang song after song, playing on the musette which he carried, in an incomparable manner. All the women were delighted with him, and none more so than the proprietor's pretty daughter Perrette, and Jeanneton, her friend.

The next day there was a great fall of snow, and for a whole week it continued so violently, that it was impossible for the traveller to continue his journey; no one regretted this, because they had an opportunity of hearing more songs and stories, and getting better acquainted with the agreeable stranger. He slept

first at one cottage and then at another, and was so pleased with his reception, that he seemed by no means to regret having been detained by the inclemency of the weather.

Every one was sorry, when, the snow having cleared a little, he was able to go away, and he took with him the good wishes of all and the regrets of some.

From the time of his departure, neither Perrette nor Jeanneton were so gay as they had been; they were less in each other's company than formerly, and seemed to avoid meeting. Jean, who had a good deal of observation, was struck with this, and was the more surprised as he thought Perrette became every day more charming, and had often envied his sister the opportunity of talking to her.

It was one day at the beginning of spring, but before the weather was sufficiently settled for the herd to be driven to the mountains, that Jean set out on a ramble, which he was very fond of doing, intending to return in an hour or two when his charge would require his attendance.

He departed from the village at the foot of Mont Cornadore, and following the windings of the little river Couze, was soon in the midst of the emerald meadows which border it. The

blackbird of the rocks had already begun his song, and the yet leafless trees echoed his half-formed notes: as he listened, he thought he could distinguish words; and, attending with eager ears, he felt certain that it was not the effect of fancy, but that a voice said distinctly,

"Where is the herd of the Vedelet?
The wolf is near, and he away."

He was startled; but he reflected that he had duly attended to his calves before he set out, that they were safely housed, the *vachèr* on the spot, and his assistants the *adjuvant* and the *gouri*, so that they were in no sort of danger from their dreaded enemy the wolf.

On he went, smiling at the fears which the bird's song had conjured up for a moment; and, climbing a steep rock, wound along a narrow path till he saw the sun shining on a cascade which leaped from a height into the valley beneath.

He paused a moment, and looked over the wall of rocks where he stood; for he found that he had arrived by chance at the entrance of the Gorge de Chaudefour, so dreaded by the whole country. Before him rose two enormous mountains covered with dark forests of pines, changeless in all seasons; below was a circular valley into

which the rays of the morning sun had not yet penetrated, but only illuminated the points of the broken rocks and obelisks of lava which filled the whole space, while the dark shadows of the huge mountains round cast a deep gloom on all besides.

Jean had often heard of this strange gorge, but had never before approached it so near; he was now seized with curiosity, and resolved to descend the slippery rock on which he stood and explore its wonders. Accordingly, he swung himself down by the tough fibres of the clinging plants and by the projecting stones which covered the surface, and at length stood in the valley.

All round him it seemed as if the earth had bubbled up and suddenly cooled, leaving high mounds of hardened lava and sharp pinnacles of rock, of irregular heights, bristling the ground over a great space. The forms of some of them were fearful and appalling: serpents with huge mouths seemed gaping at him from twisted pillars; wolves with the wings of eagles seemed ready to pounce upon him from blocks of black stone streaked with fire; flames appeared to dart their tongues out of some dark abyss on all sides; frightful faces grinned from every recess; and huge arms, holding swords and pikes, seemed menacing in all directions.

Jean stood amazed, gazing on this scene, when he felt a hand laid heavily on his shoulder, and, looking up, he beheld before him the stranger of the winter.

"Well met, Vedelet," said he; "you are early abroad: do you come as a spy or a friend?"

There was something so fierce and harsh in the tone of this speech that Jean trembled as he replied, that he came as neither, but merely from curiosity.

"Curiosity is dangerous," said the stranger, "and ought not to be lightly indulged in; but, since you are here, you shall go with me and see some things which will surprise you."

Jean had no power to resist, for his companion held him firmly as they went on, passing whole groves of strange shapes in stone, and hurrying over the torrent of the Couze as it dashed along the rocks, till they reached a long fissure in one of the highest, from the top of which the water fell in a single stream: behind this stream they passed, and paused before a narrow opening scarcely wide enough for a man to squeeze through. The stranger pushed Jean before him, however, into a cavern beyond, and followed himself. They then descended some rugged steps in the dark, till they arrived at a long passage extremely narrow.

At the end of this passage was a vaulted chamber in the rock, formed by no human hand. The roof was covered with long pendents of crystal of a variety of forms, and these gleamed in the light of several torches which were stuck about the walls. A group of men in armour lay round a fire in the midst, who, as Jean and his conductor entered, uttered exclamations of welcome.

"I bring you the little Vedelet," said the stranger: "the herd shall soon follow." There was much laughter at these words, which Jean was at some loss to understand. They gave him food, and allowed him to warm himself by their fire; but, when he entreated them to let him return, he was only jeered at. "No," said he whom they called the Captain of the Gorge, and who was the stranger who led him there, "you must stay with us; we are masters of great treasure and can make you a rich man: you must tell us the best means of stealing the herd you tended, and you shall be in future a master instead of a servant."

Jean trembled in every limb when he heard this, and the proposition made to him distressed him extremely. "The time is nearly come," continued the leader, "for the cattle to ascend the hills; they must be driven into the gorge,

instead of to Mont Cornadore, and you must direct us how to accomplish this. If you refuse, your life is not a day's value."

Jean turned in his mind what was best to be done in this emergency, and, as he looked round on the fierce faces of the group, he saw there was no safety but in apparent compliance. He therefore assumed a careless air, and answered, "One master is to me the same as another, so that I am well paid; the herd does not belong to me, and you are welcome to it if you can get it."

"Well said," replied the Captain; "you must help us too to the two pretty maidens who are always together knitting and spinning. My lieutenant and I want wives, and they will just suit."

Jean was sure that he alluded to Perrette and Jeanneton; but he pretended to be ignorant, and said nothing, while the rest laughed heartily. His mind was instantly occupied with the endeavour to devise some means of controverting, instead of aiding their designs.

"The calves," said the leader, "know you; and, if you lure them away to follow you, it will not be hard to make their mothers follow: but we must secure the *vachers*, or they will give us trouble."

"That will not be difficult," said Jean, "if you promise them as fair as you do me."

" You shall go back then to the village," said the chief, " and I will go with you; you shall say we met by chance, and I, that I am anxious to see my old friends again: we will then see about getting the *vachers* on our side, or, if not, it is but ridding ourselves of them in some secure way."

The plot was then laid between the Captain and his men, and their measures taken. The little Vedelet was not, however, admitted to their council; but was confined in an inner cavern, where he was to remain till the hour arrived when the Captain should commence his schemes for the abduction of the herd.

Jean was left to his own reflections, which were not very agreeable; he turned the matter in his mind, and wearied himself in plans to assist his master and avert the threatened danger.

He looked round the chamber of rock in which he was placed, but saw no opening offering him a chance of escape; the roof was covered with hanging icicles, and the sides were piled-up blocks of stone. A narrow fissure only at a great height admitted a ray of light; towards this Jean directed his gaze, but with little hope of its affording him any assistance.

Accustomed, however, to climb, he exerted all his agility; and, by clinging to the stones

like a lizard, he contrived to get to the top and apply his eye to the crack. He found that below the rock where his prison was perched was a sheer precipice, which ended in a valley of rocks whose pointed heads bristled up like suddenly petrified waves in commotion. All round, huge blocks of dark grey stone seemed to rise to the clouds; and the sound of rushing waters made a fearful din as they dashed over projecting eminences, and fell into gulfs beneath of more than five hundred feet deep.

This prospect was not very promising; but Jean observed that here and there, springing from the fissures of the rocks, the long arms of some shrub depended, or the roots of some antique tree projected. "If," thought he, "I could manage to get out of this dungeon, I could certainly swing myself down this precipice, and, once out of the valley, I might hide in holes and ravines till I found my time to get back to the village: but this crack is not large enough for a weasel to creep through; perhaps I could widen it with my knife, small as it is."

As he spoke, he began to work amongst the stones; when, starting suddenly from an opening in the rock, he was surprised to observe a small white animal, which he recognised as an ermine, a creature very unusual in these parts, and which

is never known to appear but as an omen of some remarkable event.

The ermine fixed its bright eyes on Jean, as if to encourage him. He was soon able to render the opening wider, and to his great joy he found that he could get his body through. He had scarcely done so when he found himself, as it were, carried off his feet, his head whirled round, and he became unconscious.

When he recovered his senses, he found himself lying in the stable, with all his calves about him; and began to rub his eyes, and look with amazement on all the familiar objects he beheld, uncertain whether he was not in a dream. Presently, however, he saw the *vacher* enter, and heard him calling his name in an angry tone. He showed himself immediately, and interrupted the chiding which was prepared for him, by entreating to be brought before the master, as he had a tale of importance to relate. His request was complied with, and, to the astonishment of all, he recounted his adventure with the Captain of the Gorge, and warned the master to be on his guard, as doubtless some attempt would soon be made to steal away the cattle. The consternation was great; but it was, nevertheless, evident that they were protected by the fairies, as Jean had been so singularly aided.

Perrette and Jeanneton both heard his story with great vexation and alarm, for the handsome stranger had made considerable impression on their minds; his having, however, spoken of himself *and his lieutenant* as wanting wives, offended both, as it was evident he had not made his election between them. They now joined heartily in invectives against their perfidious guest, and every one held himself prepared to defend the herd in case the robbers arrived.

They sent messengers to several villages round, and numerous bands of determined young men joined them without delay. No signs, however, of the depredators appeared; and day after day the season advanced and became fairer, so that they prepared to drive the cattle once more to the hills.

Amongst those who came from a distance on this occasion was a very aged man, who was reputed to know many things; and, when he had listened with attention to the tale of Jean le Vedelet, he pronounced that the whole was a delusion, and that he knew from long experience that the Captain of the Gorge and his men were phantoms, who always appeared before a calamity to the cattle.

"Depend on it," said he, "that this year the herds will be attacked by some malady." And

so indeed it proved, for they had not been long in the mountains, when disease was observed amongst them, and the master lost more cows that season than had ever before been known to die. The calves, however, owing to the care of little Jean, got well through all; and it was not long before Perrette, in gratitude for all the fidelity he had shown to her father, smiled on him, and in course of time he was rewarded with her hand.

Jeanneton, however, would never be persuaded that the Captain of the Gorge was a phantom, for which unbelief the fairies took revenge upon her; for, not long after her brother's marriage with Perrette, she disappeared from the village, and was never afterwards seen. Some of the villagers, returning late across the mountains, have asserted that, passing the entrance to the Gorge of Chaudefour, they have heard strange sounds of revelry, as if in the interior of the rocks, and a female voice singing, which they thought had very much the tone of Jeanneton's.

Whenever the howl of a wolf is heard in the nights of winter close to the *vacheries*, every one draws closer round the fire, and looks fearfully towards the door, expecting it to open, and the Captain of the Gorge to enter. He has occasionally appeared, always when least expected;

and is received with civility, though his evil intentions are known: but the herdsmen are on their guard, and, though a malady amongst the cattle is sure to happen after his visit, they are in some measure prepared, and take all the necessary precautions to avert it, so that his coming is considered rather a piece of good fortune than otherwise. He has, however, long ceased to be seen, and none but very old persons remember the period at which he used to appear.

St. Nectaire is seen from the height of Murol, and is one of the attractions of the Mont Dore. The Cascade des Granges near, is one of the prettiest of those which abound here.

At the foot of the gigantic Puy of Mount Cornadore is the valley famous for its *incrusting springs*, similar to those of St. Alyre at Clermont, but producing the more delicate specimens of the two, some of which we were careful to secure in the form of medals, which are of the greatest beauty and sharpness. The Château de St. Nectaire is now demolished, and no vestige remains, but it was once famous in the country; the celebrated Bishop of Le Puy, who took so distinguished a part in the troubles of Le Velay in the sixteenth century, was of this ancient

house. His sister's is a name famous in the annals of romantic adventure.

The elevated church of St. Nectaire is a very striking object, and the points of view round are full of beauty and interest: this is a favourite resort of painters, and some fine pictures may be made on this spot. The botanist and mineralogist find here endless food for their researches, and the antiquarian must be delighted with the antique church, where once were to be seen the tombs of St. Beaudeme and St. Auditeur, disciples of St. Nectaire, who, although his *existence* even has been denied, was said to have been also buried here.

Some Druidical remains are found in the neighbourhood, near the Bains de Boite, and on the mountain of Chateauneuf. On Mount Cornadore was formerly the strong and extensive castle of Châteauneuf, beneath which are a series of remarkable caverns, formed by volcanic influence.

Below this mountain rise the numerous hot-springs which have given celebrity to the village. Those which have the incrusting property were discovered in a subterranean recess, and above them now stands the *Etablissement d'incrustations*, the successful rival of those of St. Alyre de Clermont.

The baths are considered of great service in rheumatic cases and in those of paralysis.

The neighbouring Leap of Sailhaut is a fine cascade, which precipitates itself over a rock of lava of the Volcan de Tartaret. The Roche Longue, the Puy de Mazèyres, and that of Eraigne; Grandyrol and its tower, with the mysterious cavity near it; Fontenille, and the caves of Jaunas; the Château de St. Diéry, and many other wonders are near;—all worthy to be seen, and all curious in the extreme.

The heroine of the country, Magdeleine de St. Nectaire, was married at an early age to the Seigneur Guy de Miremont, and was left a widow almost immediately. She was rich, young, and extrèmely beautiful; all which circumstances made her an object of general attraction. "The proud Amazon," as she was called, although she accepted the homage offered at her shrine, bestowed her smiles on no one of her adorers in particular. She felt an enthusiasm for liberty, which nothing could quell; had embraced the reformed doctrines, and, touched with the sufferings of her country,—a prey to party and the victim of disorder, she resolved to dedicate her life, her strength, and her fortune to the cause of religion and patriotism, allowing no love but that of glory to have a place in her heart.

Sixty young knights, armed to the teeth, served her as a devoted and constant escort. A word,—a look of their divinity was sufficient to excite them to the most daring deeds; and with such soldiers what might not the fair and resolute leader attempt? Confident and undaunted, she advanced to the very gates of Riom and Clermont Ferrand, took possession of their outskirts, made herself mistress of several châteaux, and ventured a battle in the open plain with the Lord of Montal, lieutenant of the King in Haute-Auvergne. She defeated him more than once, to his great vexation; and he determined to revenge himself by attacking her ancient manor of Miremont, where she and her knights had retired after their victories.

This siege was a memorable one, and most gallantly was the château of the modern Clorinda defended. After sustaining the attack for fifty days, and having, with her band of heroes, performed prodigies of valour, she at length determined to make a desperate sally, and put an end to the protracted siege.

Mounted on a fiery charger, which her hand guided and quieted at will, full of grace, beauty, and majesty, in all the pride of youth, and flushed with the hope of conquest, the heroine headed

her party, and issued forth from her stronghold, with the vizor of her helmet raised, her eyes flashing fire, and her arm wielding a sword of proof. Montal himself met his beautiful foe, and his steel was struck from his hand by her attack; on she went like a lightning flash, followed by her gallant band, dispersing the Catholics in all directions, throwing them into irretrievable confusion, destroying their tents, and sending them flying from the walls of Miremont, against which nine hundred cannon-balls had directed their vengeance in vain.

When the news of this valiant feat of arms reached the ears of Henry of Navarre, he exclaimed, "Ventre St. Gris! if I were not king, I would my fate had made me Magdeleine de St. Nectaire!"

Far different was the part enacted in those times by her brother, the no less famous Anthony de St. Nectaire, Bishop of Le Puy. Dedicated to the church from infancy, he preserved his faith inviolate towards the religion of his fathers, and saw the defection of his sister with regret and pious dismay. His beauty was equal to her own, and was the theme of universal admiration; when he marched at the head of his troops, for his warlike propensities and his zeal kept pace with those of Magdeleine, he was higher by the head

than the rest. He bestrode a mule richly caparisoned, was clothed in a suit of armour entirely black, and wore on his breast a rich cross of gold; his coat of arms was blazoned in silver on his azure mantle, and a scarlet plume nodded on his helmet. His complexion was of roses and lilies, his eyes of bright blue were dazzling in their aspect, his countenance was mild and grave, and all his actions, accompanied by an indefinable grace, which "won all hearts his way." He was of Herculean strength, and was generally armed with a huge club, which he carried over his shoulder, for he was said to have a horror of shedding blood.

When the enemy was before him in battle, no one was more resolute than Monseigneur du Puy; but on the trying occasion of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, when he received the order of extermination, his mercy was evinced in the prompt determination which he took to save the devoted people, who were looked upon as enemies to religion. His words are worthy of record, when he addressed an assembly of Huguenots trembling for their lives:—

"Gentlemen, the orders I have received can only concern the rebellious and seditious Calvinists, of whom, thanks to the Eternal! there are none in this place. We read in the gospel

that love of God and charity to our neighbours is the duty of Christians; let us profit by the lesson which Christ himself has given us. Children of the same Father, let us live together as brothers, and have each towards each the benevolence of the Samaritan. These are my sentiments, and I trust you all partake in them; they have caused me to feel assured that in this town there exists not a single citizen who is unworthy to live." *

The consequence of this harangue was, that every one present declared himself a true Catholic, and no altar of blood was raised in Le Puy to the sanguinary Catherine.

* The same discourse was held by the excellent Bishop of Dieppe, with the same result.

CHAPTER XVII.

Bourboule.—Aimerigot.—The Little Feet.—The Changeling.—La Roche Vendeix.—Pic de Sancy.—Cascade du Serpent.—Marais de la Dore.—Vassivière.—Banne d'Ordenche.—Return Northward.

La Bourboule is one of the baths much visited by strangers, and has in itself and its neighbourhood many objects of interest. Its waters are of great efficacy, but the establishment not of much extent, though the springs are very abundant.

The springs issue from blocks of sandstone, which mingle with the granite rocks round. One high rock rises above the hamlet, and is covered in the spring and summer with luxuriant flowers; the nodding digitalis and glowing tufts of pinks of different species enamel it all over. The rock is very steep, and throws its shade over this part of the valley long before the rest is sheltered from the summer sun. The Dordogne murmurs at its feet, and sparkles over the large stones which check its course. In the time of storms, this gentle river becomes a rapid

torrent, rolling along its angry tide huge masses of dark rock, which it has brought down with it from the ravines.

Above the village of the baths of La Bourboule, the approach to the beautiful wood called Le Bois de Charoude is, after crossing green alleys of emerald verdure, interrupted by little groves of beech; meadows are near, covered with flowers of every hue, and just beyond them you enter a leafy portico of immense size. Here huge beeches erect their columns to the height of fifty feet before their long branches spring forth; then, meeting their neighbour trees, they become interlaced and crossed, forming a canopy from the rays of the sun, which, peeping through the glittering and trembling leaves, throw their light in mazy chequers on the dark sward beneath.

The wood is in the form of an amphitheatre, and has a most majestic appearance; an universal silence reigns, for the birds prefer the higher parts of the mountain, where the trees are lighter, and the aspect less sombre than in the interior of this solitary retreat. Considerably elevated above the beeches, groups of oaks raise their lofty crests, the aristocracy of the forest, keeping exclusively together.

After descending from Le Bois de Charoude,

by following the course of the stream, and passing some low shrubs and bushes of broom, you come suddenly upon La Roche des Fées, from whence a fine and extensive view is obtained. Around is the sombre wood, the shining stream below, with its vales and meadows, from whence rise pointed rocks, grey and aged, and hung with garlands of vegetation. On the opposite side of the valley, a forest of pines veils the country beyond.

The Roche des Fées is a celebrated object in the neighbourhood, and many are the legends told to account for the prints traced by the curious on the surface of the rock.

It is said, that in former times a company of fairies inhabited La Bourboule, and had taken the country under their protection. They were beneficent, amiable, and anxious for the good of the people, to whom they were continually rendering services. In the first place, it was they who cut the granite rock, and allowed the pent-up waters to descend to the valley, forming the pretty lake below, which supplies the village with water; by this means the meadows were rendered fertile: they pointed out the hot springs, and directed that their healing waters should be confined in basins, and no longer permitted to run to waste. They taught their

properties to the inhabitants of La Bourboule, and we are assured that they were themselves in the habit of using the baths. They also protected this part of the country from the incursions of Aimerigot Marcel, the terrible robber chief, who dwelt on the opposite mountain called La Roche Vendeix.

Aimerigot, who was jealous of the good they did, was always trying to circumvent them, but without effect, till on one fatal occasion he accomplished the purpose he had so long in his mind of expelling them from the Monts Dores.

One day, it was a grand festival with the fairies, and they had all met on the rock above La Bourboule; their enemy perceived, from his fortress opposite, how they were engaged, and rejoiced in the hope of surprising them. The benevolent little beings were seated in a circle, *drinking beer* out of cups, and eating *an omelette.* Some of them were in their kitchen, which was, as still may be seen, divided from the saloon by a small ledge of rock. In the principal chamber, those of highest rank occupied a bench under a canopy of stone, which is also pointed out; and all was mirth and gaiety, when the lances and helmets of the brigand chief and his party were suddenly seen glittering above the rocky peaks close to them.

Terror and consternation took possession of their bosoms, an instantaneous escape was necessary, and, leaving everything in the utmost confusion, they darted into the fissures of the rocks on all sides, and were lost to view. All that the robbers found, however, on reaching the spot, was the impress on the stone of their stove, where the *omelette* had been cooked, of their drinking-cups which they had cast down as they fled, and on an elevated point the impress of two beautiful little feet!

All these cavities can be seen to this day, and, after rain, are filled with water, doubtless the tears of nature for the loss of these gentle creatures, who were never after seen in the country!

There is no telling what might have been their own grief, for occasionally, in nights before a storm, may be heard a low wailing along the range de l'Angle, and a fairy, with a child, is occasionally seen near the Grand Cascade. The latter, however, is probably not of the same race; as mortal children have been known to disappear, and been afterwards recognised in the arms of the fairy of the Cascade. One peasant woman of Le Mont Dore, having left her child in its cradle when she went to work, found an ugly imp in its place on her return: she went immediately to Monsieur le Curé, who told her that, in his opinion, the fairy had

taken her son and replaced him with her own. He recommended her to carry the little imp into the market-place, and there *whip it as long as she could stand over it.* The mother followed his instructions, and, sure enough, she presently saw the fairy of the Cascade appear with her own beautiful babe in her arms, which she threw towards her, exclaiming, "Take yours and give me mine!" The shrieking imp was delivered to her, when she immediately disappeared.*

From the fearful precipice called Le Basin de l'Eau Salée, and the majestic Montagne de l'Aigle, the basaltic height of La Roche Vendeix is at no great distance.

La Roche Vendeix is very remarkable from the numerous inclined prisms which compose it. A magnificent panorama is to be seen from its summit, and here once stood the stronghold of that enemy, not only of the fairies of Bourboule, but of all order and peace, Aimerigot Marcel, roi des Pillards, whose adventures formed so conspicuous a feature in the disturbances of the fourteenth century, and who was the ally of the English against all France. Here he and his desperate band of ruffians lived, and from hence they descended into the plains and towns, and scoured the mountains, more terrible than the volcanoes which once burnt around.

* The same superstition is current in Brittany and Wales.

Not a vestige of the castle of this hero, whose history Froissart has recorded, and of whom he says that "nothing came amiss to him which was not too hot or too heavy," now remains. It was most effectually destroyed after his downfal, that it might not again serve for similar purposes.

There is, however, more than one tradition respecting this identical castle, and another way of accounting for the foot-prints in the rock. The following is sufficiently romantic; but, when the wildness and beauty of the place are considered, it is scarcely extraordinary that such a belief should once have existed.

LEGEND OF LA BLONDE DE LA ROCHE.

Instead of *le roi des Pillards*, Fancy made the inhabitant of the now vanished castle a certain countess, a widow, with an only daughter, beautiful as day, who was generally called La Blonde de la Roche.

The countess was a woman of great learning, and passed all her time in study; so that, as she never invited any one to the castle, and was never known to leave it to visit any of the neighbouring lords' families, there was little gaiety going on there, and it was a melancholy

abode enough for one so young and lively as La Blonde. She had a nurse, of whom she was very fond, and with whom she was allowed occasionally to wander in the most secluded parts of the mountains. Often, as they sat beside a fountain in the midst of one of the beech-groves, she would inquire of Maguelonne what kind of place the world was, and how those passed their time who lived in it.

"My mother tells me," she would say, "that it is full of crime and cruelty and deception, and that there is neither happiness nor safety except at a distance from it. But I have seen in her chamber pictures of knights and ladies, and gallant shows and tournaments; and, when she was young, she says she was the queen of the feasts, and gave prizes to the young combatants. This must be very pleasant, and very much better than living here, always surrounded by trees and rocks, with none to speak to and no one to admire."

"You are right, my child," said the nurse; "and I should never have been able to endure this solitude myself, but for a certain reason."

"What is that? pray tell me," said La Blonde.

"You must know," returned Maguelonne, "that almost every night, when I have seen you safe in bed, I go away with some of my

friends, and visit the world and all its gaieties, taking care to return before daylight, so that my absence is not suspected."

"You amaze me," said La Blonde; "I have often waked in the night, and still found you beside me."

"My body was there, it is true," replied the nurse; "but my spirit was far away. I will tell you my secret. When I was first here, I became weary of this rock on which we live, and was one day crying beside a fountain, such as this where we now sit, when I mechanically gathered a little blue flower, and, plucking its leaves one by one, let them drop into the water, till there were nine floating on the surface. Presently the waves rose with a great noise, and a small stream darted up in the centre of the fountain, which, as I looked at it, seemed to take a female form. It beckoned me and smiled; and I heard a voice, like the twitter of a bird, say, 'Maguelonne, will you be the fairies' sister, and you shall see all you desire?' I was so happy and pleased, that I said yes; and, in an instant, the little figure detached itself from the pillar of water, and, springing to the brink, sat down by my side. I found myself directly become as small as the fairy, and had no difficulty in following her as she

bounded away as light as a leaf, just touching the flowers with her feet, and standing on the top of a drop of dew as if it was of hard crystal. I loved that fairy extremely, and we used to wander about for hours, always by moonlight, as then I was not missed in the castle; and we visited every part of the world, seeing palaces, and gardens, and fine places, and charming people, always gay and merry. This lasted for many years, till you grew up; and now I never go to see the fairies, as I prefer staying with you, and have seen the world enough."

"Oh, nurse," said La Blonde, "give me some of that blue flower, and let me be a sister of the fairies too."

From the time of this conversation La Blonde had no reason to regret the dulness of her abode, for new enjoyments, wonderful and exciting, came to her. She and her nurse, every night after the family were gone to rest, were accustomed to leave their bodies in their sleeping chamber, and roved where they pleased over the whole face of the globe.

One day they were sitting by the same fountain, and La Blonde was as pensive as the first day her nurse had revealed the wonderful secret; for she had ceased to enjoy her nocturnal rambles, and confessed to Maguelonne that they

had lost their charm. "I see nothing by the light of the sun," said she; "the world must be more pleasant by day."

"There is but one way to satisfy you," replied the nurse; "will you renounce altogether your own nature, and become, not a sister of the fairies, but a fairy herself?"

"How can this be?" asked La Blonde.

"Follow my example," answered Maguelonne, "and you will see how easy it is."

So saying, they both descended the height where they were seated, and, traversing a part of the wood, came to a torrent, over which an aged pine, which had fallen across, formed a bridge; when about half-way over the stream, Maguelonne stooped, and, from the bark of the pine, gathered some long green lichen, such as hangs like a fringe from the barks of these trees. She threw some of this into the water, which, bubbling up instantly, sent forth from its circles a little figure, who beckoned them on through the forest as it sprang before them, till, following where it led, they reached a high rock. Having climbed this, they arrived at a broad *plateau*, where a curious sight awaited them.

A great number of fairies were busily employed in cooking, round a stove, numerous dishes, which others carried to a table in the

centre, round which sat three of higher rank. They rose when Maguelonne and her charge approached, and it was then only that La Blonde perceived that she and her companion were both become as small as those they came to visit. They were invited by signs to sit, which they did, without a word being uttered by any party. A grand banquet was then brought, and wine was poured out in little crystal cups, about the size of acorns. No sooner had La Blonde drunk that which was given her, than they all rose, and, clapping their hands, surrounded and overwhelmed her with embraces and kisses. "She has drunk of the crystal cup, and is now a fairy," they exclaimed.

It was then that La Blonde discovered what a strange race she had allied herself to. Not one of them but possessed some peculiar talent which she employed to assist, and sometimes to annoy a mortal, in some way or other, if she desired it. Now she understood how it happened that the wheat was sometimes so plentiful, and sometimes the crops failed altogether. If the fairies breathed on the fields, they withered; if they danced on the ears, they became full. If they swept over the flowers with the trains of their robes, they faded; if they fanned them with the fans of feathers which they carry, they flourished.

They could make chains of the most delicate gold-work, which they left in the shops of jewellers who pleased them, and their favourites thus obtained great fortunes. They collected jewels of value, and set them in a manner to exhibit all their brilliancy; these they supplied to their favourite merchants. They wove lace, and made patterns in silk, which they transported all over the world. The whole of the rock on which they lived was a perfect workshop; they were never idle, but all their occupation was a pleasure, for it gave them no trouble, as they were certain of success.

Often, even now, the hammers of the little workmen can be heard in the interior of the rock, and sometimes in the mountain stream may be found sparks of the precious stones which they work; and, if you break the pebbles at the bottom, you will find that many contain jewels.

La Blonde led a happy life amongst them, always roving over the world with the three fairies and her nurse, and returning to their rock with a wish, however distant they might be.

One day La Blonde was wandering in the wood alone, dancing on the leaves, and leaping from spray to spray, waiting for her nurse, who was to accompany her on a far-off expedition, when she saw, coming up the mountain, as if his steps

were directed to her mother's castle, a young man of extraordinary beauty. She was so struck with his appearance, that she resolved to follow him, and found that he really stopped at the castle gate, and rang the great bell.

She entered with him unseen, and they came together into the presence of her mother, who was seated in her study occupied with her books.

"You have been very prompt in coming, Sir Emars," said she, "and are welcome. My daughter is not risen, I think, as I have not seen her since last night; but she will soon be here, and you shall judge for yourself if her beauty is equal to the report which caused you to ask her in marriage of me. She is very young and inexperienced, but as your wife will no doubt soon learn to know the world better."

La Blonde found by this, that though she imagined she had been absent a year, so much had she seen, yet her absence had not even been perceived, for a fairy's year is scarcely a mortal minute.

But, the more she looked on the young knight, the more she regretted having drunk of the crystal cup which separated her for ever from her kind. It was true she could at any time animate her own body, but with her soul she had nothing now to do, that she had given to the fairies; and

she found, too late, that she was their slave, and, if she offended them, they could injure all she loved.

She regretted having left her mother, who, while she thought her careless of her good, had been planning so happy a lot for her.

All she could now do was to ask permission of the fairies to absent herself from them. This they granted on certain conditions; and, accordingly, the next day she found herself at home once more at the castle with her nurse, and by her side sat Sir Emars, telling her of his love.

They were soon after married, and nothing could exceed their happiness till the birth of twin sons made them still more content with their lot.

The fairies had loaded La Blonde with gifts, and shown her all kinds of affection; Maguelonne had the care of the children, and appeared to dote on them. A grand christening was about to take place, and the neighbouring abbot of the abbey of St. Marie des Monts was to perform the ceremony.

The parents, attended by a great retinue, accompanied the children and their nurse on their way to the holy place; but, just as they reached the little pine bridge of the torrent, neither nurse nor children were to be found. Search was made

in vain, they were never afterwards seen—except on the Roche des Fées, where Maguelonne sat nursing them, invisible to all eyes except those of their mother, who came every day to the rock to visit them.

Sir Emars was inconsolable, and astonished at the apathy of his wife, who, as she knew where they were, did not feel the grief he expected. She was obliged to conceal from him the fact of their existence, and thus she could not relieve his mind, so that he was a prey to regret and sorrow.

At length his grief became so severe that she resolved to entreat of the fairies that she might tell him where they could be found. They never appeared to deny her anything, and did not seem offended at her wish.

It was agreed that Sir Emars should set out in the night-time, and seek through the forest, where they would place the children in a cave, and he should find them as if by chance. La Blonde accordingly feigned great melancholy, and informed her husband that she had been told by the peasants, that cries, as of children, were frequently heard in the woods, and she should never be satisfied till he went in quest of their sons, as she had a hope they might yet be found.

Sir Emars and a faithful attendant lost no

time in exploring the forest, and were soon directed by the children's voices to a cave where they had been placed. With exceeding joy he carried them away, and bore them to the castle; but what was the horror of both parents, to discover that they were, instead of being the cherubs they had lost, two ugly deformed creatures, frightful to look at, and of the most mischievous dispositions!

No expostulations, no entreaties of the mother had now any effect on the incensed fairies, who would never allow La Blonde to see her own again, and who, offended at her caprice, had resolved to distress and annoy her from henceforth.

The unfortunate lady, driven at length to despair, resolved to confess to her mother the part she had acted, trusting that her great knowledge might find some remedy for the evil she had herself caused.

The countess, though much irritated at first, consented to use all the influence she possessed to regain the children. She discovered, however, that, as they had not been christened, the fairies had power over them; but that La Blonde herself might escape the thraldom into which she had fallen, if she underwent a religious penance, and if her husband would do the same.

The abbot of Nôtre Dame des Monts had a

large sum given to his convent that masses might be constantly said for the souls of the mother and her children. La Blonde passed night after night praying by the side of the pine bridge, holding a crucifix in her arms, while the fairies danced round her, having now assumed horrible shapes, and exhibited her children in triumph, holding them near in hopes that she would drop the crucifix in endeavouring to reach them: but their efforts were vain, she remained firm; though her tears flowed with anguish, when, at break of day, she saw her former friends, and now bitter foes, disappear with the objects of her affection.

Sir Emars shut himself up in a cell of the monastery, and wore sackcloth next his skin, praying without ceasing that the spell might be removed.

Meantime, the old countess had taken charge of the two changelings, and it was as much as all her art could do to keep them in any sort of order. At length, however, by means of her knowledge of hidden powers she tamed them to her will, and obliged them to obey her like slaves. They were forced to draw water and cut timber for the castle, for, though apparently infants, they were as strong as men; and became so weary with their constant employ, that they rebelled against the fairies, and resolved

to leave a mortal life which they found so irksome.

La Blonde was one night praying with fervency by the cascade of the Pine, when she was startled by a loud scream. She lifted up her eyes, and saw her mother and the two changelings standing on the edge of the precipice above, while her tormentors, the fairies, were ranged in the vale below. The old countess held each of the fairy children by the hand, and called aloud that her intention was to dash them both from the top of the rock, unless her grandsons were instantly restored to their mother.

As she spoke, she raised the screaming imps, and prepared to hurl them down the abyss, when the fairies, suddenly coming forward, placed one of the two mortal infants at their mother's feet, and threw the other into the arms of the countess; their own progeny disappeared with them at the same moment, and the morning sun broke forth upon the happy party.

La Blonde, however, though she had recovered her children, to expiate her sins consecrated herself to the service of Heaven. Sir Emars took the cross, and fell fighting in the Holy Land.

Their two sons became powerful chiefs, but the evil they had learnt amongst the fairies was

never eradicated, and they were known and dreaded by all for their cruelty, cunning, and rapacity.

The prayers of La Blonde, after a long series of years, obtained the redemption of Maguelonne. Though the other fairies had quitted the rock at the time the children were restored, and had been seen no more, having fled into the distant region of Le Forez, Maguelonne still lingered, smitten with grief for the loss of her beloved charges; there she stood, rooted to the spot by divine command, but at length her body was freed from its punishment, and her soul found mercy and forgiveness. It is said to be the print of *her* little feet, on the spot where she stood changed to stone, that is still to be seen in the rock; and in a cell of the convent of La Sainte Larme, no longer to be found, a small stone marked the place of the Fairy's grave.

The highest point of the Monts Dòres and of the centre of France, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven *mètres* above the sea, is the Pic de Sancy; which, although rather a long and difficult journey, is well worth undertaking. It is true that the elevated summit is seldom free from clouds, and it is rare that the

wondrous views disclosed from it is permitted to the traveller, who may, however, occasionally be able to boast that he has seen from it the Alps, the Cantal, and all the long chains of the Monts Dômes and Monts Dores, with La Limagne, even to the Bourbonnais!

After having passed the Grand Cascade, seen from so many parts of the valley, sometimes crossed by a rainbow, and always throwing its long line of foam from the high rocks which encircle it, and after leaving the Ravine des Egravats, and the Roc de Cuseau, the Gorge d'Enfer and the Vallée de la Cour, a wood of firs conducts to the beautiful Cascade du Serpent, where the bright water leaps amongst the embowering trees and clustering flowers.

From thence the descent is to a singular elevated plateau, where the melting of the snows forms a sort of marsh, called Le Marais de la Dore, from the river which here takes its rise, and which receives a little farther off the stream of the Dogne; they then unite and flow into the Gironde.

Nothing can be more savage than the appearance of this desert spot, where only dwarf sallows are to be seen: the water of the marsh escapes over the surrounding rocks, and forms several fine falls. Above this you begin to as-

cend, till you come to the neck which separates Le Puy Ferrand from Sancy. Here the wind is generally very violent and the cold sensibly felt, and, as on the Puy de Dôme, mists are apt to gather and shut out all view.

If, however, the wind, as is frequently the case, clears away these envious veils, you are well repaid for the toil of mounting, by the inconceivably beautiful and extensive prospect revealed. This is the mountain usually called *par excellence* Le Mont D'or or Dore, being the highest of the range bearing that name.

The largest of the numerous lakes, once craters of volcanoes, is Lac Pavin, seen from this spot. It is one of the wonders of Auvergne. The people believe many strange things concerning it; amongst others, it is said that if anything is thrown into the yawning crater of the Creux de Soucy hard by, it reappears in the lake; and if a stone is thrown into the lake, a thick cloud will immediately rise from it, which bursts into a tempest over the surrounding country.

Beyond in this direction is Besse and the mountain of Vassivière, famous formerly for a miraculous image of the Virgin, in whose chapel so many miracles were performed, that they caused the proverb of the country in *patois*, "Per y creire, vas y veire; *i. e.* Pour y croire, va

y voir," thus punning on the name of the mountain. Some say, however, it was formerly called Vachivères, from its numerous cows and the fine pasture it affords.

The botanist and geologist find in these mountains an endless field for their researches, and the lover of nature is never wearied of his wanderings. To describe all the different sites whose beauties and wonders lure the traveller to visit them, would occupy a volume. Let every English seeker after the new and surprising, who has not seen Auvergne, which is nearer to him than the Alps or Apennines, go to the Monts Dores, and pass a summer month amongst their wild solitudes, and he will confess that too little has been said of them.

Amongst the costumes which may be remarked at Mont Dore, that of the neighbouring town of La Tour, *berceau* of the family of La Tour d'Auvergne, is peculiar, and recalls those of the middle ages, since which time it has probably never been changed. Sometimes the women wear a black gown with large sleeves, and sometimes it is blue striped, with the sleeves tight and joined, of two different colours. With this they always have a most singular head-dress, formed of a piece of black cloth several times folded, raised on the sides, and supported on the

top of the head by a kind of hoop of shining copper, to which is given the characteristic name of *sara-maliça—serre-malice.* There are various ways of wearing this head-dress—sometimes the copper band is worn close to the forehead, and the folds of black cloth are allowed to fall in different shapes of drapery round the head and over the shoulders. It has a curious monastic appearance, and the women of La Tour, many of whom we observed at Mont Dore for the sake of the baths, look in their black habits and diadem like so many lady-abbesses pacing along the parade where the water-drinkers assemble.

We left the Mont Dore on our return to Clermont by the *grande route* in company with several water-drinkers whose season was over, of which they complained sadly, having had little but rain. Two of the party we instantly recognised from their costume to be of the better order of peasants from Le Puy; the little black hat of the woman, which she carried in her lap, and the large new sombrero of her husband, told their own story.

We passed the Banne (or horn) d'Ordenche and Le Puy Gros, magnificent mountains bordering a fine valley. At Pessy, some basaltic rocks present a variety of remarkable prisms,

and the continual change of scenery rendered our journey very interesting.

Murat-le-Quaire, which looks very imposing as you approach it, and which could once boast of a strong château on a lofty rock, has nothing worth regarding on a nearer view. The valley of the Dordogne continues beautiful all the way, and the frequent peaks of gigantic rocks far and near create unceasing admiration.

Many and steep and dangerous were the mountains, up and down which the *diligence* was dragged, before we arrived at Rochefort, formerly crowned with a grand castle, now a total ruin, a fine object in the distance, once belonging to the dauphins of Auvergne. The town lies at the base of the Puy d'Augire, on the Sioule; its environs are full of geological wonders, amongst them several mines of sulphur.

We passed here a pretty country-house and grounds, the only one we had seen on the route, where some *jets-d'eau* were sending up their foamy spires in the midst of a fine lawn. This was at Cordès, and at the village of the Pont des Eaux several natural cascades burst from the rocks near the side of the road, and cast themselves into the Sioule, which we crossed.

Once more we reached the giant of the waste, the stormy Puy de Dôme, always cold and always frowning defiance to all who dare approach it; and after we got beyond La Baraque, we found fair weather and La Limagne before us.

We were now on our return northward, and only remained at Clermont long enough to secure places in the *coupé* for Moulins, our next destination. After Riom is passed, and the distant Volvic, the face of the country changes entirely, and that we had quitted Auvergne was very evident. By degrees, the dirt, slovenliness, and savage aspect, as well as the picturesque and grand disappeared, and we seemed to have come back to every-day life and common-place affairs.

It was, however, rather a relief, after a long series of discomfort, to sit down quietly at an excellent Hôtel, de l'Allier, in one of the neatest, cleanest, and prettiest towns in France, which, without doubt, Moulins deserves to be called.

CHAPTER XVIII.

La Reine Pédauque.—Moulins.—College.—Marie Félicie des Ursins. — Perrette. — Bête. — Mal-coiffée. — Yzeure.—Costume.—Cornemuse.—Bourrée.—Montargis.—Paris.—Rouen.

Our way from Clermont to Moulins lay through Aigueperse *la belle et longue ville*, which gave to France the chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital. This great man passed his infancy at the Château de la Roche, which was granted to his father in recompense for his services, by the Constable de Bourbon, and became his own at the period of his marriage. The old manor, with all its towers and donjon, still exists, and his statue adorns the town.

Gannat has nothing remarkable to offer, though once famous in the Bourbonnais for a fine convent of Augustin monks. Near the town are the remains of a fortress of great strength and size, which is now used as a prison. The town is prettily situated on the river Andelot, at the foot of hills covered with trees and vines.

St. Pourçain, the next town we reached, was once considered one of the thirteen good towns of Basse Auvergne, but is now of little importance. It is agreeably situated in a valley at the confluence of the Limon and Sioule, and its wines are said to be excellent. The church is remarkable, even in its present state, as a specimen of the architecture of the tenth century. It has, however, lost that which distinguished it and excited the curiosity of antiquarian travellers, namely, the statue over its portal, representing a female with the foot of a goose, usually called La Reine Pédauque, or Pé-doc; the same inexplicable figure which occurs in several towns in the south of France.

Moulins is, as I have said, one of the neatest, cleanest and most cheerful towns in France, and we were well pleased to rest there for some days, as the contrast is great between the towns of Auvergne and its well-kept streets, pretty shops and beautiful public walks. In the latter particular Moulins is almost unrivalled, their variety is charming, and the taste displayed in their arrangement peculiarly admirable. The whole town is in a bower of luxuriant trees, and the country round is as pretty, rural, and smiling as the delightful villages on the banks of the Thames. The Allier is wide and fine here, and is crossed

by a bridge of immense width. Everywhere is space and beauty, and if there is but little antiquity it is made up in modern *agrément.*

The rows of houses which border the fine boulevards are well built and very pleasant; they are inhabited by persons in easy circumstances, with whose occupations trade has but little to do. The genteel people here actually are *to be seen,* and it is not unusual to meet groups of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen quietly promenading beneath the trees. There is a Parisian air about everything; and the cares of eternal commerce, which in France seem now to banish all grace, pleasure, and enjoyment, may be forgotten in Moulins. There are no *great fortunes* here, but every one seems at his ease, and poverty is much less conspicuous than in any other place we had visited.

The old houses, enough of which remain to keep up the character of antiquity, are generally built of variegated brick, the patterns of which are very tasteful, and though this style of building is somewhat *bizarre,* it has not a disagreeable effect to the eye. It is less harmonious when new, as the *tranchant* white and red glares rather too much; the bricks, however, are remarkably fine, and the crimson hue they exhibit rich and cheerful-looking.

The church of Nôtre Dame has no very striking features, and was never finished. We remarked some curious painted glass, and two very fresh and expressive full-length portraits of Charles VI. and Isabeau de Bavière hanging against some pillars. So many religious edifices have been destroyed in Moulins, that they doubtless belonged to one of the numerous convents of which not a vestige remains. Many illustrious historical characters of the Bourbon family were buried here, but their tombs are all gone.

The college occupies the place of the ancient convent of the Visitation, built by a princess des Ursins. The great object of attraction here is a superb mausoleum erected by this princess, Marie Félicie de Montmorenci, to the memory of her husband, who was beheaded at Toulouse, under the ministry of Cardinal Richelieu, 30th October, 1632.

The whole of the chapel is exquisite and quite uninjured, having been saved at the Revolution by the presence of mind of a native of Moulins, who informed the rabble, assembled to destroy it, that it was erected to the memory of a man, executed for conspiring against kings. The tide turned in favour of the supposed regicide, and this beautiful and unique building was chosen as a temple of Liberty, and respected.

The duke is represented reclining in a reflective attitude; the duchess sits at his feet covered with a veil as a mourner. Valour and Liberality, Nobility and Piety support the monument, which is enriched by fine pillars of most elegant form. An urn, containing the ashes of the illustrious victim, reposes beneath a highly ornamented portico, from which hangs drapery held up by angels. The arms of Montmorenci surmount the whole.

Beneath is a Latin inscription, to this effect:—

"In the year 1652, the twentieth of her widowhood, Marie Félicie des Ursins, a Roman princess, erected this mausoleum to the memory of her husband Henry II. de Montmorenci, the last and most illustrious of the dukes of that name, Peer, Admiral, and Marshal of France, the terror of the enemies of his country, the delight of his compatriots; an incomparable husband, who never caused grief but by his death.

"After eighteen years of the utmost happiness, after having enjoyed immense wealth and possessed, without a rival, the heart of her beloved husband, there remains to his widow nothing but his ashes."

Marie Félicie was suspected of having been a party in her husband's conspiracy, and, after his death, she was arrested at Beziers and treated

with much harshness. She was allowed to choose her prison, either at Montargis, La Fère, or Moulins, and made choice of the latter. In the château, even then in ruins, she was kept for seven years, when she obtained her liberty.

She was then desirous of devoting herself to religion, and took up her abode in a house adjoining the Convent of the Visitation, where she lived for twenty years: her spiritual director himself opposing her taking the vows. During this period she caused the mausoleum to be built, and beautified the chapel as it now appears. At length she entered the order, and died a nun in 1666, and was buried in the tomb as she had directed.

In consequence of her abode there the convent became *quite the fashion* at court, and many women of rank retired there; it was customary for young ladies of rank to be educated by the sisters, and the Visitation was considered the most distinguished place at which they could receive instruction. This fashionable reputation it kept till the Revolution.

Amongst the convents of Moulins that of the Ursulines was held in high esteem. It was famous for the struggles of its foundress against the persecutions of the arch enemy of all religion. She was called Perrette de Bermond, a Pro-

vençale of high family, who, having resolved to devote herself to the church, was constantly attacked by the Evil One, who wished to turn her from her project. On one occasion he cried out to her by the *mouth of one possessed*, "*Perrette, Perrette, va-t-en en Avignon, portez les vanités avec tes sœurs!*" She was strongly tempted to leave all and return to the gay world, where she knew her sisters were enjoying themselves, but she got the better of the desire and disappointed her enemy. The devil, unwearied, then inspired *a sorceress* with the power of bewitching her, by means of a "fly filled with charms, which she swallowed, but fortunately being seized with a fit of sneezing," says the chronicler, "she was quit with a slight pain in the stomach."

In a chapel of Nôtre Dame was formerly exhibited an animal of the crocodile species hung to the roof, and in a niche close by stood a warrior armed at all points.

Tradition recounts that in the caverns of the castle of Moulins existed a hideous monster, who there dwelt and ranged about in his dismal retreat, which reached as far underground as the cemetery of Yzeure, a village near. He used to issue forth from an opening, and ravage the

country for leagues round, devouring all who came in his way. A criminal at this period was condemned to death, and offered, if his pardon was granted, to attempt the destruction of this scourge. He did so, and was so fortunate as to kill the *bête*, whose skin was hung up in the church, and the effigy of his conqueror placed there also.

It has been said that this crocodile was an *ex voto*, brought from Palestine by a pious crusader who had killed it; but, be that as it may, no more disputes can arise about the *bête*, for it has disappeared altogether.

There is scarcely anything left of the castle of Moulins; part of the strange tower called *La Mal-Coiffée* still rears its head above the brick buildings near it, as well as a little tower built by Catherine de' Medici, and apartments now occupied as a *caserne de gendarmerie*.

There is a clock tower of extraordinary height where stand some of those painted wooden figures often seen in France and Holland, called Jacquemard and his family. The custom of having them probably arose in memory of persons having been formerly obliged to cry the hour from a high tower in the night.

The father and mother of Henry the Fourth

were married at Moulins, and Catherine de' Medici held here the famous assembly whence issued the *Ordonnance de Moulins.*

The walks round about the town to the numerous pretty villages are remarkably pleasant. We were particularly pleased with that to Yzeure, where I spent some time in sketching the singular doorways and curious capitals of the *Gaulic-looking* church. The grotesque figures here were peculiarly comic, and some of the ornamental foliage very beautiful.

We understood that there were, or had been, several English families living at Moulins, which we were not surprised to hear, as it is just the sort of place adapted to our habits: there are good masters, fine air and pleasant society, genteel people and a civilised peasantry, charming rural country, and every facility for travelling.

The costume here, and of the Bourbonnais in general, is very picturesque, and singular in the extreme. The bonnets of the women, which have a strange effect in the great market-place de l'Allier on a crowded day, are *à la nacelle,* very much raised behind and before, and placed on the head in such a manner that the scorpion-tail-shaped end seems to curl over the crown; they are of straw, adorned with an open pattern

at the edges, bound with black velvet, and lined either with bright blue or rose colour. The pretty Bourbonnaise wears this over her little neatly plaited white cap, and in her crimson apron, purple gown, and variegated handkerchief, blue stockings and engraved *sabots*, is as smart a little figure as can be imagined. The size of these bonnets varies at different villages, and there is a slight difference in the shape of some of them.

The superstitious belief in the Bourbonnais was formerly much the same as in Auvergne, although the countries have little in common.

La chasse gayère, a diabolic hunt in the clouds, is still *occasionally seen*, as well as the *chasse maligne*, when the Evil One, with a pack of hounds, pursues the souls of the dying.

Once a peasant, looking through the window of his cottage, saw the whole train sweep along in the air above him, and had the imprudence to call out, "Give me some of your game!"—when a bloody arm fell down the chimney at his feet. He was never able to use his own right arm afterwards.

The *cornemuse* and *musette* are the instruments used by their minstrels, who have but an indifferent reputation, being shrewdly suspected of

witchcraft, for, on several occasions, the *cornemuse* has been heard to play of itself, though shut up in its case, with no one near it.

The fairies, though less numerous than formerly, have not quite quitted the fields of the Bourbonnais; they may be seen sometimes walking in the meadows, sweeping off the dew from the plants and flowers with their floating robes. If they breathe on the vines and corn, they cause them to wither; it is necessary, therefore, at stated times to kindle fires here and there, near their haunts, and dance round them, with loud cries, when these timorous beings are frightened away.

The national dance, called also *Bourrée*, is much more quiet than that of Auvergne; it has even a melancholy character. The manner in which it is danced is this:—the *musette* sounds, two long lines of performers are placed face to face, with their arms hanging down like recruits at their first exercise. The cavaliers then take the hands of their opposite ladies, who resign themselves to the customary kiss with becoming gravity. After this, the movement begins, the line of men advances, the girls retreat, and *vice versâ;* they then go to the right, then to the left, then *dos-à-dos*, then turn suddenly face to face,

and recommence the coming and going, increasing the time.—

"Holding out to tire each other down"

is part of the amusement, but they never dance so quickly as the Auvergnats, who strike hands, stamp their feet, and are more boisterous in their movements, laughing, and calling out, whereas in the Bourbonnais the eyes are cast on the ground, and no smile appears on the countenance.

The inhabitants of Moulins have the character of being proud and less commercial than their neighbours, and apparently with some justice. They have a proverb, which was repeated to us by our smart little attendant at the pleasant Hôtel de l'Allier, where, *par parenthèse*, we were exceedingly well served at a moderate charge—

"Fière Moulins, pauvre St. Pierre, et riche Nevers."

St. Pierre le Moutier, where once stood a famous monastery, does, indeed, deserve to be called poor, for it is a wretched-looking place, but Nevers merits little to be called rich, if one may judge by its dilapidated, dirty, slovenly buildings. We did not remain at either of these places, as our way was now to Paris by Montargis, a very pretty clean lively town, in the Loiret, on

the borders of a fine forest, which joins that of Fontainebleau. The canals of Briare, Orleans, and the Loing meet here; the town is in a fine plain; above it rise the remaining towers of the once important castle of Charles V., now mixed in with modern buildings of all sorts and kinds.

The position of the castle height is splendid; a very beautiful but neglected rose-garden runs along the upper part of the hill, into which we penetrated, finding no one to impede our progress, or of whom we could ask permission to enter.

The groves, fields, and walks, by the canal at Montargis, are delightful; the public walks exceedingly extensive and agreeable, and the fine open part in which the principal hotels are situated, very airy and handsome. The approach to the capital was easily observed in the dress and manners of the people, but not in the charges at our hotel, for both here and at Moulins we found them more moderate than in Auvergne, and our accommodations infinitely superior, as might be expected. We heard nothing of the legend of the famous Dog of Montargis, while here; probably, all trace of the fresco has disappeared.

The drive through the fine forests of Montargis and Fontainebleau is a great treat, and

we were surprised to find that the impressions we had received on our former tour, of the beauty and grandeur of this forest scenery, with its fine ranges of rocks, were far from being effaced by the wonders of Auvergne. It seemed, indeed, as if part of the strange wild chaos of that region had been transported nearer Paris, for the peaks and masses which rear their frowning forms amidst the gigantic trees, and strew the valleys here, have much resemblance to those of Le Velay.

There are few things to be compared in beauty to the forest of Fontainebleau, in whatever direction it is passed: we had never before seen this part and were extremely delighted with it.

The fine church and antique castle of Nemours were objects of great interest in our way, and as fine weather, waited-for all the summer, seemed now to have arrived in all the glory of warmth and sun, we enjoyed our drive to Corbeil, where we were to enter the railroad to Paris.

This railroad is one of the best I ever travelled by; steady, quick, and over a beautiful country by the river side. We reached Paris, eight leagues' distance, in an hour; and without trouble or bustle, which too often attend

the arrivals by this mode of conveyance, were safely deposited at our hotel in the Place Vendôme, ready to take advantage of all the novelties which, after a twelvemonth's absence, we found the most agreeable of all capitals had accumulated.

CHAPTER XIX.

Chemin de quarante sous. — Vernon and Vernonette. — St. Patrice at Rouen. — Autograph of William the Conqueror. — Chasse de St. Sever. — Drogon de Trubleville. — Model of St. Maclou. — Miracle des Billettes. — The Jew. — Route to the coast.

We intended returning to England by Dieppe; and bidding, therefore, a reluctant adieu to Paris, whose beauties, though often seen, seem ever new, we hired a carriage to Rouen, and set out for Mantes where we were to sleep.

St. Germain detained us just long enough to enjoy the promenade on its magnificent terrace, the views from which can scarcely be paralleled anywhere, and then, avoiding the *route royale*, which passes through Poissy and Meulan, we pursued our journey by the "*Chemin de quarante sous*," which shortens the distance by about two leagues.

The scenery between Paris and Rouen, whether by land or water, is too well known to require description; but there are certain parts of the route which must always elicit admiration. Such,

for instance, as the approach to Mantes, with the lofty towers of the cathedral standing out in bold relief against the sky;—such the picturesque bridge of Vernon, with its numerous mill-wheels and architectural forms of the middle ages; such the position of the royal château at Vernonette, behind which forests extend as far as the eye can reach, while the river runs at its feet;—such the winding descent to Louviers, —the beautiful forest, as we approach towards Pont de l'Arche; and, finally, the mountain-road, at whose summit the distant spires of the capital of Normandy burst upon the view.

But even on this road, beaten as the track must be, the stranger meets with few travellers: we, for our own parts, encountered but one travelling carriage,—a solitary cabriolet, and a small band of the fraternity of St. Simon. This is chiefly to be accounted for by the fact, that out of ten *diligences* which leave or pass through Rouen for Paris, *nine* of them perform the journey by night, a proceeding which savours more of the economy of daylight, peculiar to a mercantile town, than of a love of the picturesque.

Although we had frequently visited Rouen, which, indeed, lies in the way of almost every traveller's description, — we found that there

were still several objects of interest which we had not previously examined. Amongst them were the *vitraux* of the church of St. Patrice, whose exquisite beauty is far beyond description. Executed in the early part of the sixteenth century, when the art of painting on glass had attained its acme in France, these windows are remarkable for purity of design, fidelity of detail, accuracy of drawing, and extreme brilliancy of colour; some of the effects of light are indeed so striking, that it is with difficulty we are persuaded that the spot is not illuminated by factitious aid from behind. The subject of the principal window, which, it is conjectured, was executed after the designs of the celebrated Jean Cousin, represents "The Triumph of the Law of Grace," an allegory finely conceived and admirably painted. The upper and lower compartments have relation to the same theme, and are not inferior in execution. Other windows contain, "The Woman taken in Adultery," "The Annunciation," of surpassing beauty, "The Life of St. Eustace," and, as a matter of course, that of St. Patrick, with the miracle of the "toads and frogs," figured here in the likeness of a scorpion. The greater part of these fine works of art are dated, and bear the names of the donors.

Another curiosity, hitherto unvisited, was the *Musée d'Antiquités*, which has now been open to the public about seven years. It is situated in the Rue Poussin, and occupies two galleries of the cloister of the ancient convent of Sainte-Marie. The antiquities date from the earliest period of French history, commencing with the Gauls, and passing through the era of the Romans and Gallo-Romans, to the middle ages and the period of the *renaissance*. The remains of the Roman theatre at Lillebonne has furnished much, and the neighbourhood of Rouen a great deal more. To us the most interesting portions were those that referred to the middle ages, and especially to the records of the Norman and Angevine races. Thus we gazed with extreme interest on some early charters, one of which bore the autograph of William the Conqueror,—a rude cross, resembling more the two-handed sword which he wielded in fight, than the signature of a Christian king, attached to the designation "SIGNUM WILLELMI NORMANNORUM DUCIS," which attested his ducal quality. Another of a prelate, quite as illiterate as the warrior-king, bore the abbreviated legend "SIGNŨ HUGONIS EPĪ," and then followed a cross traced in lines far less firm than those *graven*, as it were, by William. A third charter, beautifully en-

grossed, unfortunately wanted the signature, which would have shewn us the hand-writing of the accomplished Trouvère, Richard Cœur de Lion, who, equally skilled in arms with his famous predecessor, had something of the learned clerk in his composition.

The Chasse de St. Sever was also an object of our admiration. It is one of the few relics which still exist of the treasures formerly possessed by the cathedral of Rouen.

This beautiful reliquary is formed of oak, and is covered with plates of silver and copper-gilt, of rich design, with chased patterns, and borders ornamented with coloured crystals. It is of oblong, ark-like shape, consisting of four portals, in which are placed the figures of as many bishops, and eight panels, decorated with roses formed of coloured stones, and heightened by gilding. Three of the figures, representing St. Sulpice, St. Germain, and St. Melaigne, are of plated silver; but that of St. Sever, to whom the reliquary was dedicated, and which occupies the principal portal, is gilt. The chasse, which is supposed to contain the remains of St. Sever, and the *arms* of the other three saints, was presented to the cathedral by one of its canons, Drogon de Trubleville, who caused to be engraved on the border which runs round

the base, the following inscription, which is still distinctly legible:

"Hanc cassam dedit Drogo de Trubleville gloriosæ virgini Mariæ, in qua positum est corp. beati Severi et brachia sanctorum Sulpicii, Germani, Melagni: hos ego Drogo precor ut me sic vivere precor ne dãpner donet et me p̃fata (præfata) coronet."

The names of St. Severus, St. Stephen, and St. Sulpicius are also inscribed, together with the two following verses from the Psalms:

"Dom̃ine, dilexi decorem domus tui
Ne pdas (perdas) com (sic) impiis animam meam."

The date of this precious relic, which is ascribed to the latter part of the twelfth century, is confirmed by the appearance of the name of Richard Cœur de Lion, "REX RICARDVS" on the rim of the plateau.

The model of the church of St. Maclou, executed at least as far back as the beginning of the sixteenth century, is also worthy of notice. It is formed of wood and *papier-mâché*, and is said to be the work of a priest belonging to St. Maclou, who employed ten years in its construction.

The windows of painted glass which are preserved here are extremely fine specimens: amongst them we particularly observed a mi-

racle recorded of St. Nicholas, which formerly adorned the church of St. Godard of Rouen. That no doubt may exist as to the author of the miracle, the following inscription is attached:

"Comme Saint Nicollas ressuscita les troys Clerz."

The colours are very vivid and harmonious. Another series of windows, one in the church of St. Eloi of Rouen, represents the history of the Jew and the sacred host, called the "Miracle des Billettes."

It purports to relate the story of a *rich* Jew, who lived in the Rue des Billettes in Paris, during the reign of Philippe le Bel, and who tempted a poor woman, — a Christian, — to purloin the host that he might desecrate it. In the first window we see the woman urged by poverty, presenting herself at the house of the Jew to raise some money on a part of her dress; in the second the Jew is bargaining for the robe, which he purchases, and offers to return to her if she will procure him the consecrated wafer; in the third the woman has yielded to the temptation, and brings him the host, receiving her dress in exchange; in the fourth we behold the Jew seated at a table, on which the wafer is lying: he has transfixed it with

his dagger, and a stream of blood is spouting from it; in the fifth, the conscience of the woman having been alarmed by the miracle which she had secretly witnessed, she accuses the Jew, who is taken before the *prévôt;* the sixth window, representing that only of the whole story which was true,—the burning of the Jew,—is wanting.

There are many more specimens of equally beautiful workmanship, and the Museum is rich in fragments of sculpture in wood and stone, coins, weapons, statues, seals, and antiquities of all kinds and dates. It is highly creditable to the zeal and taste of the Rouennais to have made this collection, and no traveller should pass through the city without examining it.

After a short stay at Rouen we pursued our course to the coast, and paused there for a few days to visit some of the most interesting objects in the neighbourhood.

Of these, the most attractive within a day's excursion from Dieppe, is the royal Château of Eu, distant about seven leagues, and lying midway on the road to Abbeville.

CHAPTER XX.

Château of Eu.—Arques.—Varengeville.—Ango.—Curiosities near Home.

After ascending the long hill which rises above the faubourg of Le Pollet, occupied chiefly by the fisher population of Dieppe, and containing upwards of five thousand inhabitants, the road runs along a high table-land, disclosing a wide, uninclosed, but cultivated tract of country; nor is the level at all varied until a steep, winding, descent indicates the position of the village of Criel, which, with its picturesque church, lies embosomed in a pretty wooded valley, within two leagues of Eu. Another tedious acclivity, and a continuation of the same kind of country as before, and then the high roofs of the château and the lofty spire of the collegiate church of Eu rise gradually upon the view, until they form the foreground of an amphitheatre, on one side of which is the town, and directly opposite a broad expanse of forest.

The circuitous approach to the heart of the town, through narrow winding streets, is a sufficient preparation for the impression caused by the odd, angular, sloping market-place, in which the Hôtel de la Cigogne is situated, where the traveller puts up during his stay. The buildings around are high and irregular, and on one side are crowned by the lofty pinnacled apsis of the ancient church, which looks down with a feudal air, recalling the menacing character of the protection it was wont to afford in former days, when the papal dominion was supreme.

To the quiet precincts of this time-honoured fane our steps were first bent, with the certainty that, whatever the hour, access would not be denied; the little side door was noiselessly pushed open, and we stood beneath the roof of the edifice dedicated to "Our Lady and the blessed St. Lawrence;" the latter not the patron saint of the Escurial, but an archbishop of Dublin in the twelfth century, who died in the odour of sanctity, and at whose tomb so many miracles were performed, that, *at the instances of succeeding abbots*, his name was added to the holy calendar.

Like most of the ecclesiastical edifices of the middle ages, the church of St. Laurent underwent the vicissitudes of war and fire—of design and accident; it suffered most in the year 1455, when

the steeple was struck by lightning, and the building in a great degree destroyed; but to this circumstance it owes much of the beauty of its present external form. The nave and aisles refer to an earlier period, though nothing within the church reveals the time when before the high altar were celebrated the nuptials of William the Conqueror and Queen Matilda. The oldest and most interesting part of the building lies, however, beneath the spot where those royal personages stood, for immediately under the choir, and occupying the same extent, is situated the crypt, in which are deposited the ashes and sepulchral monuments of the Counts of Eu, and many of their lineage. There are here more statues together than we had yet seen in any church in France.

At the period of the first French revolution these monuments were displaced, but suffered no great detriment by their removal, the mutilations, as far as they extended, having been well repaired: the tombs only on which the effigies repose are modern, though of antique form. These effigies are numerous, and are ranged on either side of the crypt, the male being on the right, and the female on the left hand. An intermediate space is allotted in the western extremity to that of St. Laurent; the saint is sculptured in full pontificals, in pure white

marble, the hands and a part of the face alone having been restored. Of the Artisian princes the most remarkable is Jean d'Artois, who was taken prisoner at Poitiers, and was afterwards killed at the siege of Valognes, in 1368: he was the son of the celebrated Robert d'Artois, who chiefly instigated Edward III. to undertake the invasion of France. His features are fine, and recal the attributes which we willingly ascribe to the chivalrous gentlemen of the old French school. The statue is all of marble, except the spurs, and they are rude and rusty enough to be original. The constable Philip, who was killed at the battle of Nicopolis, in 1387, and Charles d'Artois, a prisoner in England for twenty-three years, lie sculptured there, the latter wearing the mantle of a peer of France; two scions of the house of Artois, Charles the son of Jean, and Philip the son of the constable, have their effigies also; that of the young Philip being much mutilated from the fact of its having lain for a long time in a gutter at Triport till it was accidentally discovered.

On the female side, we paused to gaze with admiration on the fine but wasted features of Isabelle de Melun; her effigy is well preserved, and the little dogs at her feet, as well as her elaborate costume, are carved with great delicacy.

The fair Isabelle d'Artois, who died unmarried at Eu in 1397; the beautiful Jeanne de Savense, who only survived her marriage with Charles d'Artois five months; Helène de Melun, his second wife, and other princesses, complete the series, whose restoration is entirely due to the taste and munificence of the present king. The ornaments and armorial bearings of this princely family are all in keeping with the original costume, and have been most carefully executed. In the *petit caveau*, or smaller crypt, are the remains of other tombs and effigies of saintly and noble personages.

The church itself owes much also to Louis Philippe, who expended large sums in restoring it both externally and internally. The most striking additions are the fine windows of painted glass at the west end, the principal one being embellished with a representation of the Trinity, beneath which are the Virgin and infant Christ, and the archangels Michael and Raphael, on one side of whom are St. Lawrence and the famous Duke Rollo of Normandy, and on the other William the Conqueror and Philip Augustus. Below are the escutcheons of the King and Queen of the French, the Duke de Penthièvre, Mdlle. de Montpensier, the princes of the house of Artois, and the Dukes of Cleves and Guise.

The general character of the internal architecture is light and fanciful, and the whole has an air of extreme elegance. Some very ancient inscriptions, one of them bearing the date of 1312, and an exceedingly well-executed relief of the latter part of the fifteenth century, are amongst the many relics of antiquity which meet the eye. Of modern date, the lines to the memory of the Duke de Penthièvre, the brother of the King of the French, *who lived every day of his life as if he were every day to die, beloved by God, by the King, and the people;* and those on the Duchess of Orleans, his mother, are the most interesting. The latter inscription touchingly says, " Her virtue was an ornament in her prosperity, a consolation in her misfortunes, and a defence in death."

It is but a few paces from the portal of the church to the gates of the château, the general appearance of which, with its lofty roofs and numerous windows, resembles the Tuileries in miniature. The present building dates from the time of Charles IX., having been constructed by the Duke de Guise; but on the spot where it stands the old feudal Castle of Eu had existed from the commencement of the tenth century; destroyed by fire in 1475, nothing of it now remains save a small ivy-covered tower near

the margin of the river Bresle. It is, however, to *la grande Mademoiselle* that the principal architectural embellishments of the present château are owing, during the period of her exile from the court of Louis XIV. on account of her refusal to espouse the King of Portugal. The park and gardens are her work, and she it was who formed the original collection of portraits which still adorn the château. These portraits, with the additions subsequently made, constitute an historical gallery, which forms the chief attraction of the place;—nothing that can aid in recalling the memory of the past has been forgotten.

In the entrance hall the taste of the present royal possessor is shown by introducing the stranger to the early feudal lords of Eu, whose busts are ranged on pedestals around. Here are seen Robert of France, the son of St. Louis and progenitor of the house of Bourbon, the famous Count de la Marche,—the Prince de la Roche sur Youne, and the Count de Montpensier, Gilbert de Bourbon, of whom an old historian said that he was " bon chevalier et hardi, mais peu sage; *il ne se levoit qu'il ne fust midi*," a sufficiently late hour, it must be confessed, for a gentleman of the old school, when dinner was served before noon.

From the worthies of the olden time,—the

representatives of the families of the Montmorencies, the Clissons, and others famous in story, we followed our guide into the grand *salle-à-manger*, where many of the *celebrités* of the French army in modern days are congregated. Here we beheld the portraits of Rochambeau, Kellerman, Montesquieu, Dumouriez, Kleber *the French Mars*, with his flowing locks and eye of fire, and several of Napoleon's marshals,—amongst them Mortier, who died by a bullet, not in the field of battle, but in the streets of Paris, a victim to the infernal machine of Fieschi. In the same room are others of an earlier date; the celebrated Vauban, the brave and enterprising Villard, and James Fitz-James, Duke of Berwick, the natural son of James II. of England. In the gallery beyond are a host of great names, modern and ancient, where conspicuously appear Washington, Poniatowski, Kosciusko, the great Sobieski, Gustavus Vasa, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII. of Sweden, the brave Crillon, Arthur of Brittany, Xaintrailles, so honoured of Froissart, and the renowned Du Guesclin. In opposition to these men of war, are the Duke de Penthièvre, known as The Wise, and he who was called, by the accident alone of birth, *Le Grand Dauphin;* both are surrounded by their families.

In the cabinet of the prince royal, which succeeded, the principal portraits are of the time of Louis XIV., with the exception of Charles VII. of France, the "Roi de Bourges," as he was jeeringly called till roused to action by his beautiful mistress. Here we gazed upon the charms of the lovely Laura Mancini, and on the spiritual countenance of the Princess de Conty, whose strange husband was for ever reading Ovid to her in the original, and who never went to bed without his pistols. The princess, it is said, gave him one night a *quid pro quo*, by preparing for her slumbers armed with a musket and a sword. Here, too, are the profound Colbert and the father of the Grand Condé.

The prince's *salon* comes next, where also we stand before the warrior, the politician, the beauty, and the man of pleasure. Philippe le Bon of Burgundy, and his rash ill-fated son, Charles the Bold,—the clever, crafty, miserly Louis XI.—Gabrielle d'Estrées, Henrietta of England, and the handsome, profligate regent, Duke of Orleans. But the portrait of chiefest interest is that of Catherine de Medicis. Her appearance does not betray her Italian origin, and is totally unlike her portrait at Tanlay, and some others I have seen; she is here represented

as exceedingly fair, with the reddish tinge in the hair, at that time fashionable amongst queens; her nose is thick, the expression of her countenance sensual, and her features smooth and regular. In her mouth alone are the tokens of that strength of character which made her what she was. Her hands are small and delicate and seem fitted for dainty purposes,—"poisoning in jest," for instance!

The adjoining room,—the *chambre à coucher* of the prince royal, contains many extremely interesting portraits, all except one being originals. That exception is Louis of France, Duke of Orleans, the brother of Charles VI., and husband of Valentine of Milan, who was murdered in the Rue Barbette, in 1407, by the partisans of his uncle, Jean Sans Peur, Duke of Burgundy. The features are handsome and full of intelligence, and the picture bears all the tokens of having been copied from an authentic likeness. Amidst a blaze of royal beauty, where shines conspicuous the fair but haughty Mdlle. de Blois, whom the regent, her husband, used to call *Madame Lucifer*, peep forth, the lineaments of one whose wit and talents, no less than her personal attractions, have preserved her memory. It is Marion de Lorme, and the influence which she exercised in life, over all who

approached her, has extended itself to the painted canvass, and rendered her the cynosure of every eye, though surrounded by all that is lovely. From this charming face we turn to the harsh features of the proud Benedicte de Bourbon, Duchesse du Maine, whose hatred to her husband was expressed in these bitter words—"There remains for me nothing but the shame of having married you."—Here also are the unfortunate Marshal Biron, the astute Père Lachaise, the Princess of Monaco "*plus coquette à elle seule que toutes les femmes du royaume ensemble,*"—Louis XV., as a boy, Francis I. of Austria, General Lafayette, and, most interesting from the force of contrast, the father of Napoleon. A neater, smarter, better dressed, or better produced gentleman of the old school it would be difficult to discover. On his round and rosy cheeks, and over his well-curled *aîles de pigeon,* hovers an air of content, smiling as if ambition were a thing that had existence only in a dream. Who that looks at this portrait could fancy him the father of such a son?

The celebrated Christina, Queen of Sweden, has bequeathed her name to the next apartment. It is called so on account of the portrait given by her to Mdlle. de Montpensier, which formerly graced it. It is no longer here,

but there are others which well atone for its absence: Charles V. of Spain, the Duke of Alva, Lorenzo de Medicis, (by the way, bearing no resemblance to the famous bust by Michael Angelo,) the Chevalier Bayard, and the great admirals of France: Bonnivet, who was killed at the battle of Pavia, Chabot, who fought by the side of François Premier, on the field of Marigny, and the great and virtuous Coligny, the earliest victim of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Maria Leczinska, surrounded by her family, the Duchesse de Grammont, Mdlle. de Clermont, the heroine of a true tale of Madame de Genlis, the last Condé and his princess, Mdlle. D'Orleans, are amongst the many other portraits that decorate this chamber. The corridor to the *salle-à-manger* is devoted to the tutelar divinity of the château, *la grande Mademoiselle*, who is here represented as a huntress, and is surrounded by all the ladies of her suite, painted in the costume and with the attributes that denoted their several tastes. Thus, Charlotte de la Tremouille, for instance, whose bent was mathematical, wears a corset inscribed with geometrical figures, and Anne le Veneur, of rather a turbulent temper, is attired as a Roman female warrior. In proof of the militant propensities of the last-named lady, it is told of her

that, in a moment of irritation against Mademoiselle, she threatened her illustrious mistress. "There is nothing," she said, "that I will not do to spite you; and I shall be vexed indeed, if you do not complain of me. I will publish manifestoes against you all over the world." The princess replied, "You will gain nothing by that; the princes of Europe are too nearly related to me to abandon my interests for yours." Another of these ladies was Madame de Frontenac, who, while she was at St. Fargeau, "menoit la plus plaisante vie du monde." She never rose till dinner-time, and had to be sent for twenty times, and when she did it was often in *dishabille*, and her hair undressed. As a set-off against her late rising, she used to have *petits soupers* in her apartments, which lasted till five o'clock in the morning. The pendant to the portrait of Mademoiselle is that of Christina, represented partly in armour, and surmounted by emblems of all the arts and sciences. The picture is as *bizarre* as the mind of the original. Several battle-pieces and other historical subjects fill up the corridor. The small *salle-à-manger* is dedicated to the Orleans branch of the royal family, beginning with the brother of Louis XIV., and ending with those of the present king,—the latter admirably painted by

Faure. The apartment of Madame Adélaide, independent of its real simplicity, has much to excite a pleasurable feeling. It remains very much in the same condition as when occupied by Mdlle. de Montpensier, whose cypher and armorial bearings appear in various parts. The portraits of the kings and queens of France are numerous, and there is one—that of Jeanne d'Albret, whose strength of mind and force of character bear a striking resemblance to the present royal occupant. The adjacent *salle de famille* contains the portraits of the present royal family,—all the princes being in military uniforms; and in the *salle de travail* is a full length of *Egalité*, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, also in full uniform and admirably painted. The countenance is full of talent, but obscured by the effects of an intemperate life, which all the skill of the painter has been unable to conceal.

This long suite of apartments occupies the *rez de chaussée;* the rooms above are no less attractive. On the walls of the grand staircase are two large modern pictures—one representing the late Duke de Bourbon consigning the sepulchral monuments of his family to the collegiate authorities of Dreux, and the other the Duke de Guise, demanding permission to present to Charles IX. the warriors who distinguished

themselves at the battle of Dreux; the *salon de réception* is still called the "Galerie des Guises," from the number of portraits which it contains of the house of Lorraine. Here, of course, are *Le Balafré*, and his father François, who was killed by Poltrot; Catherine de Medicis again, with the same fair complexion, light eyebrows, and hazel eyes,—and her niece, Mary Stuart, whose history belongs as much to France as Scotland. She is in widow's weeds, wearing a long white veil, which falls over her shoulders, and is swathed in linen to the throat;—her hair is auburn, her eyes hazel, and complexion exceedingly fair; the mouth is very pretty. From hence we crossed the *salle des gardes*, pausing, for a moment, only at Turenne and Condé, and Spinola, and entered the *salle de billiard*, which contains no less than seventy-two portraits.

England has its illustrations in this apartment, in the persons of Elizabeth, Charles I. and II., and Oliver Cromwell. Sully is there, with his confident motto inscribed on his breast, "Quo jussa Jovis;" near him are the turbulent De Retz and the wily Mazarin, and, close beside, the *grand politique* Richelieu and his victim Cinq Mars; the features of the latter are impressed with a mournful beauty, which eclipses

even the richness of his costume. Madame de Montespan, Diane de Poitiers, Marie Touchet, and Agnès Sorel succeed, the latter with scarcely more attire than the portrait of Jane Shore in the provost's lodging at Eton. The accomplished as well as lovely Marguérite de Valois, smiles as she was wont to do in the happy retreats of Blois and Chenonceau.

The *salon des rois*, as its name indicates, is filled with the portraits of the crowned heads of France; but the most striking object is one that gives evidence of the extraordinary talents of the late lamented Princess Marie. It is a copy of her equestrian statue of Joan of Arc overthrowing her first foe, and though this is merely a plaster cast it is wonderfully expressive, and shows that the original must be full of genius. Seeing it here, it has a greater charm than in any other locality.

There are several fine pictures in the antechamber of the king's cabinet, but to describe all in this fine collection would be impossible. We remarked as we passed onwards another portrait of Mary Stuart, La Reine Blanche, and Isabeau de Bavière. In the cabinet itself, which is plain and simple, and has the air of a place where work is really done, is a family picture, including Madame de Genlis, who is

represented playing on the harp. In the queen's apartments, which lie beyond, are also many interesting portraits—the Constable de Bourbon, Popes Innocent XI., Sixtus V., and Paul IV., the unworthy Cardinal Dubois, and the noble Fénélon.

The chapel on the ground-floor is decorated in extremely good taste, and has a fine painted window; a copy of the well-known picture of St. Amélie, of Hungary, by Paul Delaroche; the colouring extremely vivid, and the effect remarkably good. Two more pictures in the last antechamber, and this hasty imperfect catalogue must close; the first preserves the lineaments of the most hideous woman that perhaps ever sat to an artist. It is Margaret, Countess of the Tyrol, who died in 1369. She was surnamed Maulstache *(gueule de sac)*, and well did she merit the sobriquet. It is impossible to imagine anything so utterly frightful as this portrait, and the only way to convey the slightest idea of her ugliness is to liken her to a bull-dog undergoing the metamorphosis that is to convert it into a woman. The head is as round as a ball—the cheeks broad and pendulous—the nose flattened, the nostrils wide, and the mouth, as her cognomen implies, yawning like the mouth of a sack. She is moreover *decolletée* in a manner that adds most dis-

agreeably to the repulsiveness of her person. With all her ugliness there is about her an air so indescribably ludicrous that it is impossible to look at her without bursting into a fit of laughter. This is heightened by the fact of her holding a delicate rose-bud in one hand. The force of contrast could no further go! He must have been a clever and a bold artist who painted Margaret Maulstache, and, in consenting to transmit her features to posterity, she must have possessed a spirit equally undaunted. The second picture was one which we were also surprised to find in this collection. It is the portrait of an old woman, whose costume and complexion indicates her eastern origin;—her features are strong and marked with harsh lines,—and the expression of her countenance is stern and determined; she wears on her head an ample yellow shawl, with full borders of green and blue, which fall on her shoulders,—in her hand she bears a hookah. The inscription beneath tells us that it is the portrait of the "Princesse de Sendanha,"—the celebrated Begum Sumroo, and was a present from herself to Louis Philippe. The Begum's history is so closely connected with that of the East India Company, and the disposition of her enormous wealth is so singular, that to

any one acquainted with the circumstances, the portrait possesses extreme interest.

The remaining attractions of the Château of Eu are all external, and are principally to be found in the park and gardens. In the midst of a fine wood of beech, not far from the building, is a bank of turf which marks the spot where the plans and plots of the princes of Lorraine were secretly discussed. The. king has caused it to be surrounded by a trellis, and has placed in the midst a marble slab, bearing the following inscription:—"C'est à l'ombre de ces hêtres que les Guise tenaient leur conseil au seizième siècle."

These ornamental grounds, modelled upon the English style, are laid out with great taste and kept in excellent order. To preserve what is interesting, and embellish that which is susceptible of improvement, are amongst the many traits in the character of Louis Philippe which command our respect.

It would be a sort of *lèze-majesté* against the memory of Henri Quatre, were I to leave Dieppe without a word of the Castle of Arques, which rises above the field where the king defeated the Duc de Mayence. It is an interesting spot in every point of view, whether from its early

history, which is lost in antiquity, its association with the name of Henry, or its highly picturesque form and situation. It is distant about five miles from Dieppe, and the road to it, which runs along the slope of a gentle *côteau*, would be a very pretty one were it not so entirely overshadowed by trees as to be always wet and dirty. This is a defect which characterizes almost all the cross-roads in France, and suggests doubts which are too often well founded when one is told of the attractions of some "*joli petit village*," which *must* be seen,

After passing the hamlet of Bouteilles, and the chapel of St. Guinefort, we emerge, as it were, into daylight, and ascend the broad, stony road which, bearing the high-sounding name of the "Rue de Rome," runs through the village of Arques. The place itself is clean and pretty, but the aforesaid street rather resembles the dried-up watercourse than a thoroughfare, so rough and unequal is its surface. The houses, however, are neat, and picturesquely situated, and the tower of the old church, which in detail is very beautiful, adds much to the general effect. It is only a stone's throw to the château, but as it is a *lion*, it must, of course, be *shown*, and an active intelligent boy soon presented himself as a guide, under whose direc-

tion we mounted the steep path that leads to the ruin.

From the very indifferent sketches we had seen of Arques, we were not prepared for the number of towers and turrets and encircling walls that still remain; and when the broad mass burst upon our view, the surprise we felt was quite equal to our delight. The castle, which is surrounded by a deep dry ditch, stands on the slope of a lofty hill, inclining towards the north, the donjon being far more elevated than any other part. The towers of entrance and the flanking buttresses are of enormous size, their broken outlines and ruined surfaces attesting their solidity. This castle is built of various materials, some parts being entirely of brick, some of stone, and the oldest of flint; all, however, are involved in the same general ruin, from the contentions of the time of Charlemagne or of the Romans to those of the sixteenth century. The walls are in many places thickly overgrown with ivy, and from amongst "the rents of ruin," the mountain ash and other slender shrubs wave gracefully in the breeze. The *enceinte* is considerable; the upper part, for it is distinctly divided, being now converted into an excellent *jardin potager*; the domain of the *gardien*, whose low-browed dwelling has

been built amid the walls beside the keep. The view from the castle is very fine; on one side are the heights, occupied by the troops of Mayence on the 21st of September 1589; on the other, the hills on which the army of Henry was encamped; the plain, beneath, the battle field of Arques. A winding stream is seen in the distance, and in the back-ground lies the town of Dieppe, beyond which is caught a glimpse of the blue and distant sea. It is a spot where one might linger for a live-long summer's day, now climbing among the ruins and exploring all their hidden recesses, and now descending to rest upon the smooth elastic turf, to gaze idly into the face of heaven, and lose ourselves in the recollections of the past. It was not till the sun was near setting, that we prepared to return to Dieppe.

There is yet another attraction within the compass of a pleasant walk;—the really pretty but scattered village of Varengeville which contains the château of one illustrious among the Dieppois,—the celebrated merchant Ango,—the host and friend of François Premier. Though now converted into a farm-house so little of its external form is defaced, that the eye can readily trace all the richness of decoration which distinguished the style of the *renaissance*, when it was

built. The walls are principally constructed of black hewn flint, which alternating with a white stone produce a very beautiful mosaic. They retain all the sharpness of their original construction, and the sculptures with which they are enriched are of the most classical and graceful form. A number of large medallions above the grand entrance and along the façade of the principal *corps de bâtiment*, are remarkable, — and Ango was too good a courtier not to include amongst them the portraits of François Premier and Diane de Poitiers. In the interior are some finely sculptured fire-places and the remains of a large fresco, but they are only to be discovered by groping amongst the greniers into which the apartments once so splendid have since been changed.

I have dwelt thus long upon this part of Normandy, so much within the reach of the least enterprising traveller, because on that very account it is generally passed over in silence, and that which would afford great pleasure to the curious is little visited or appreciated in consequence of being near home.

Notwithstanding that we had been climbing amongst ruined castles and tracing the ornaments of old houses for so many months, we were yet highly gratified by our visits to these places; and,

considering all the delight we had felt in our rambles and all the novelties which had rewarded us in the little explored region of Auvergne, I think I may with confidence recommend a similar excursion to the geologist, the painter, the historian and the traveller in search of new objects of untried interest.

THE END.

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